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L E O .

A NOVEL.

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ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

M.DCCC.LXIII.

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L E O.



CHAPTER I.

A DRONE IN THE HIVE.

OUR Babylon has been seldom afflicted with the violent improvements which have often ravaged continental cities. We sometimes tender to the genius of alteration a corner building here and there, or permit a rookery to be pierced, or oust poverty from a back slum,—but we never sacrifice a whole hecatomb of houses ; we never sweep away at once an entire street, to establish a new boulevard or open up a magnificent vista. Our changes are in the nature of nibblings rather than great bites. Yet is our London gradually wearing

a new face. By careful cosmeticizing and adroit dressing it grows more and more comely of aspect. Light is permitted to penetrate where once it was barely known, save by hearsay and accidental reflection; gas-pipes thread the thoroughfares, and water is generally laid on, and a subterranean city toils for the sake of order, and decency, and cleanliness, in the world above ground; and of course these things are matters of congratulation. Still, it is with regret we learn now and then of the loss of some relic of an older age—even though it may have been an abuse, it was yet a landmark in our own history, in our town's, in our globe's. The new white teeth we buy of our dentist are very excellent, admirable, ornamental—even useful,—but that preceding extraction of stumps was decidedly a painful business.

Has Improvement gone round with double-tie brush and set a mark of destruction in white-wash upon a pleasant row of houses known as Sun-dial Buildings, in the Temple? Have these been partitioned into lots, and numbered and lined until they resemble the diagrams of dishes in the cookery books which profess to give instruction how to carve? Has the iconoclastic labourer,

pickaxe in hand, mounted on the walls, and with aid of pulley and rope, been busy sending baskets of bricks—mockeries of game-hampers, presents from the country—to his fellows below, toiling behind a high hoarding, as though ashamed, as well they might be, of their occupation? The reader must for himself answer these queries. But if Sun-dial Buildings yet exist, as of yore, red-tiled, ramshackle, worm-eaten, smoke-grimed, defiant of architectural and sanitary reformers,—gifted with all the inevitable picturesqueness of age and dirt—I pray you go view the premises. And should incentive be wanting to this mission, problematical and unsatisfactory as I concede it may be under the progressive economy of metropolitan improvements, why then, let me give you motive for inquiry. It is in Sun-dial Buildings that the first scene of our novel is laid.

Unto which of the learned and illustrious Inns did the Buildings pertain? Were they of the Middle or the Inner Temple? Did their inhabitants fight beneath the armorial ensign of the Pegasus or of the Holy Lamb? Nay, why should I pause to set down such particulars? To these questions, also, it were better to obtain answer on the spot.

On a certain black door on the first-floor landing of one of the houses in Sun-dial Buildings two names were inscribed in thick white paint. It was quite necessary that they should be marked with some distinctness, for the staircase was very dark, and visitors had to grope their way, poring over the names they were in quest of, as travellers at night strain their eyes to read finger-posts. By making out each letter separately—perhaps by feeling them after the manner of blind people reading their embossed books—the words finally deciphered were, “Mr. A. PAGE:” and underneath, “Mr. R. HOOPER.”

The black door gave entrance, however, to very light and pleasant rooms. These had formerly been tenanted by old Mr. Tangleton, the veteran special pleader, who was said to have lived in Sun-dial Buildings for nearly half a century, and during that period to have consumed more port wine (fruity and full-bodied), played more rubbers at whist (long, guinea points), and produced pleas of more cunning and curiousness, and of a ^{higher} ~~higher~~ degree of intricacy and incomprehensibility, than any three other men in the Inn put together—which was saying a good deal, undoubtedly. For some years preceding his demise, the old gentle-

man had never stirred outside his black door, seldom from his great greasy arm-chair by the fireplace, hindered partly by increasing age and infirmity, and partly by a love of ease and a stanchly conservative hatred of alteration; and at the time of his death he had grown to a size so enormous—having been always a man of gigantesque mould—that, it was rumoured throughout the Buildings, his coffin had to be lowered from his front windows by means of strong ropes, the undertaker's men having positively declined the responsibility of conveying a burden so extraordinary, down the rather tortuous staircase in the usual way. The chambers were then found to be in a state of terrible dilapidation. The white-washer had never once set foot in the place during the period of Mr. Tangleton's tenancy. In the corners of the rooms swung cobwebs, so thick, and interwoven, and strong, that they would probably have made very trustworthy hammocks for middle-weight rats. The Turkey carpet was in holes, and every trace of pattern had been trodden out, or was else secreted beneath a closely-sown surface of dust. The walls, not hidden by the shelves upon shelves of law-books, were black with dirt and age, the paint peeling from

them, and curling off in large sheets here and there, as though, like snakes, they were shedding their skins. The ceilings were so cracked that they looked as though they were tessellated with a brown, monotone material unskillfully put together; they were clouded angrily with dust and smoke, while in places the plaster had fallen, and an interlacing of laths was exposed to view—just as the warp and woof of cloth are visible when the nap is thoroughly rubbed away. But the old special pleader dead and buried—(he left no will, and the great bulk of his enormous wealth devolved upon his laundress, a one-eyed woman of eighty, who, it seemed, had been also his wife for some years,)—Mr. Arnold Page entered upon possession of the chambers, and wrote A. PAGE upon the exact spot on the black door which had formerly borne the memorable name of TANGLETON.

Certainly the rooms hardly looked the same as when they were under the rule of Tangleton. The painter, the decorator, the upholsterer, had rendered valuable aid. Silken curtains profusely gimped, and corded, and tasselled, now draped windows which had once stood nude, and dirty, and cracked. Outside were Venetian blinds to

ward off the fierceness of the sun, and diminish the glare of light from the river. Gold-mouldings edged the rooms; velvet pile carpets caressed the feet of the visitor, and deadened the creaking of boots and the noise of footfalls; antique, carved, oaken book-cases replaced the common shelves of the late special pleader; and light literature now reigned in places which had known before nothing but reading of the heaviest and most legal description. Bronze and gilt chandeliers depended from the ceilings; pier glasses towered up from the marble mantelpieces above the polished steel stoves; paintings in admirable frames, adorned the walls; while scattered about the room, were statuettes in Parian, real and good bronzes, cut-glass candelabra, and various delicate specimens of Dresden and old Chelsea china. Substantial furniture—all oak—chairs of various patterns, and elaborately easy, padded couches. Yes, and a grand-piano, and a flower-stand in the window crowded with plants, and positively a canary bird hopping about from perch to perch, proud of his golden plumage, which eclipsed even the brilliant lacquer of his cage.

It was hardly to be wondered at, therefore,

that the gentleman who had brought about all this splendour should be the object of some curiosity and canvassing amongst his fellow diners and students in Hall. Of course, information about him was speedily forthcoming, as it is forthcoming concerning any and every body, if you are careful to ask for it often, and loudly, and persistently enough.

“Page!—oh, yes!—Arnold Page—Pages of Woodlandshire—good family—tidy estate, I believe. Yes!—he’s a swell—lots of money—wish I had. Oh, no! he isn’t going to practise at the bar—only called for the fun of the thing. Why, he keeps a man-servant, who wears a cockade in his hat; an awful chap, because Page holds a commission in the Woodlandshire Yeomanry, I suppose; or because his father was a Waterloo man. Oh, no! he ain’t proud; not a bit; very good sort of fellow, I believe, and clever too, when he likes to give his mind to a thing. You see, he started with odds in his favour—two to one, I should say. Born with a silver spoon in his mouth, that’s the fact—wish I had been. No, he don’t care for the Temple port; he’s got a better tap over at his chambers; such a swell place—fitted up like a drawing-room, bless you,” &c., &c.

Some, such statement, containing the above particulars, was not unfrequently asked for and given. As to why a gentleman so prosperous as Mr. Page had chosen to eat his terms and abide in old Tangleton's chambers in the Temple, it was less easy to arrive at a satisfactory explanation. Fortune having made already other and better provision for him, he could not be said to aspire to any of those political preferments which involve a seven years' standing as an indispensable qualification. Mr. Arnold Page, of Oakmere Court, Woodlandshire, was secure in the possession of very considerable wealth and first-rate social position. His father—a soldier who had seen active service under the great Duke, and who had been dead many years—had sat for the county, and the rumour went that young Mr. Page would offer himself as a candidate on the occasion, if not of the next vacancy certainly of the next but one, without a doubt being entertained that his so doing would result in success. It was only, people said, his disinclination to place himself in opposition to the present member, a very old gentleman, and a connexion of the Page family, that had prevented his long ago contesting the election and taking his seat in Parliament as one of the members for the

county of Woodlandshire. In that case, he would, of course, as his father and grandfather had done before him, have found his way to the benches occupied by the influential party in the House who are presumed to represent the landed and agricultural interests of the country; for political conviction runs through a family and is as hereditary as gout or insanity. In his Eton and Oxford days, of course, a young fellow takes up with revolutionary sentiments, or entertains odd notions about Venetian constitutions, Doges, and Councils of Ten; but he passes through these as through the measles and the chicken-pox, to arrive finally at those confirmed mental disorders which have ranged his progenitors before him sturdy combatants under a prescribed Parliamentary standard and converts to the political creed of a party. At present, however, it might be premature to discuss what course Mr. Page would pursue in the event of his return as a member for Woodlandshire. There was little evidence as yet of his having assigned to himself any special career other than that of an independent gentleman residing *en garçon* in very admirable apartments in the Temple.

You could obtain from Mr. Page's windows,

between the massive old walls and buttresses of the Hall on the one side, and a graceful group of limes on the other, very pleasant glimpses of the river Thames—now silver-bright in the sun, now rather jaundiced by the heavy-laden London clouds brooding over it. You could watch the hare and tortoise progresses of the smart little steamboats and the round-shouldered barges; you could note youthful amateurs plying their oars in the wherries in a manner singularly unlike the steady, ready, adroit performance of the waterman in the burletta, and also the dapper boating gentleman poised so dexterously in his skeleton outrigger, looking almost as though he were riding on a walking-stick with a two-pronged fork on either side by way of rowlocks; and you could trace out, too, the low-lying Lambeth shore, very patched and uneven, brown and Dutch-like, bristling with chimneys and canopied with smoke. You were within ear-shot of the spirt, and pelt, and clatter of the fountain, and of the chatter of the birds, and the prattle of the children, and the rustle of the leaves in the memorable and historic gardens of the Temple.

The London season quite in decadence: autumn weather setting in, mist quenching heat: the last

drawing-room held, and the Court already from town; the closing performances of the opera announced, grouse-shooting at hand, Parliament up, more, dissolved: candidates busy courting their constituents, unparliamentary society thinking of papering its blinds, and having made up its book and its party for Goodwood, of taking its jaded, fevered cheeks to be fanned and renovated by cordial sea-breezes and beach exposure and exercise; Jane busy with her handbox, sewing it up in canvas after the manner of her sex *en voyage*; John engaged with the straps and buckles of his knapsack; much over-hauling of *Murray*, discussions upon passports, *visas*, and railway and steamboat time-tables; great productions of alpenstocks; small men once more slapping their chests and talking of doing the Matterhorn, and Captain Martingale starting yet again to break the bank at Baden Baden—this time for certain.

Dusk: the birds and children asleep, the gardens deserted and quiet, Mr. Arnold Page sits at his open window, and the fragrance of cigars floats out into the evening air. A half-emptied bottle of claret stands upon a small table at his side. Mr. Page looks at his watch.

“Another quarter of an hour, Jack,” he says, “and I must be off. I promised to meet the Carrs at the opera. It’s their last Tuesday. I ought by rights to have gone round to Westbourne Terrace and dined with them; but I must now join them at the theatre. I shan’t be long after the overture. Help yourself, Jack.”

Jack was a rather small, spare gentleman, curled up in a large arm-chair. A tumbled sort of gentleman—careless in his dress, not particular as to the brushing of his coat, or his boots, or his hair. He looked as if he had rolled himself accidentally or been hurled by somebody else into the chair, rather than as though he sat down in it deliberately in an ordinary way. He was huddled together in a creased mass; though sometimes he would stretch a leg over the arm of the chair, sometimes, indeed, over the back, and leave it hanging there, whilom exposing a wide expanse of sock between the end of his trousers and the commencement of his unskilfully-laced boots.

Lazily, listlessly, and as though the slight effort necessary were a matter of considerable inconvenience and trouble, Jack filled his glass, puffed at his cigar, and then buried his hands deep in his pockets, sinking his chin upon his chest.

Arnold Page looked at him quietly. There was a pause.

“Well, Jack, you don’t seem to say much,” said Mr. Page, at length, in a tone of reproach.

“Forgive me. You see I get rather knocked over when important news comes too suddenly upon me. And I never could make up my mind in a hurry about anything.”

Jack sipped his claret; this speech was evidently rather an effort for him, and he needed refreshment after it. He surrounded himself with smoke, jerked his hair from his eyes, and resumed.

“Of course, you know, I should like to say all that’s right and do what’s proper and that. But—matrimony—isn’t it rather serious and responsible, and that sort of thing, you know, old fellow?—I think I’ve heard so.”

“So have I,” Mr. Page remarks, rather drily; “but you see, Jack, a man must marry at some time or other.”

“Do you think so?”

“Isn’t marriage inevitable?”

“Hum. I’ve heard that death is. They can’t mean the same thing, I should think.”

“What a Pagan you are!” and Mr. Page

rises from his seat and begins to pace up and down the room. "Of course I'm quite aware that the announcement of an event of this nature is accepted by one's friends as a hint to cultivate whatever talent for epigram they may happen to possess. I'm prepared for all manner of smart things being levelled at me. They'll not be sharp enough to cut very deeply. So I scorn even to hold up a buckler of any kind before me. We'll talk of the feeling of the business by-and-by. Mere sentiment, and heart, and that, are, of course, quite secondary considerations, according to the modern plan of looking at things. Isn't it a good reason for getting married, that one's bored with single life, as it seems to be a good reason for getting a divorce that one's bored with matrimony?"

"Please don't talk like a man in a play, old fellow," says Jack, imploringly; "I can't keep up with you: I can't, indeed. You see, you've got no end the pull of me. You've rehearsed your part. If I do happen to pump up a smart impromptu on the occasion—and I ain't a good hand at that sort of thing at any time, I admit, freely—why, you've a lot of smashing speeches, all ready cut and dried, to come down

upon a fellow with. Don't stalk about, swinging your arms, like a restless light comedian. Do sit down. I'm not going to say anything horrid on the subject. I merely want to understand it. If you put sentiment out of the question, I confess I don't see my way."

"I marry," Mr. Page says, sitting down laughing, "for a nurse for my old age. I'm getting on, Jack. I detected three gray hairs in this front curl this morning. At a ball the other night, a child of seventeen—a pretty little bit of a thing, that looked like a rosebud in tarlatan—declined to waltz with me, and whispered to her sister that I was too old. It was rather hard to say that of a man under thirty. But one can trace one's age in the faces of one's contemporaries. *You* don't look anything like so young as you used to, Jack. For Fanny Clipperton—whose first season I remember well—she was quite the town rage—well, she's now the mother of seven children, and looks forty."

"Rubbish! a man's no older than he looks. You'll pass for a youngster for a good many more years, in spite of what chits of seventeen may choose to say, with their idiotic nursery notions. Why should you grow old, who've never had a

care, or a trouble, or a gloomy thought? When *your* face wrinkles, it will only be from your having had to smile too often and bear an overload of happiness."

"Well, then, I marry because it's the right thing to do. And I'll go and live with my wife at Oakmere Court, and look after my tenants. I'll cram Burn's *Justice of the Peace*, sit on the magistrate's bench, and come down hot and strong upon poachers. I don't see why I shouldn't play the part of country gentleman very well; and I'll take my seat, perhaps even office, when the time arrives for the innings of our side of the house. Besides, marriage gives one importance, strengthens one's hand—I shall gain in political influence."

"Hum! and the lady is——"

"Is the daughter of old Carr, who owns Croxall Chase—a very fine estate; it adjoins mine in Woodlandshire."

"An old family?"

"Well, no—a railway contractor; the grandfather founded iron and the family and made all the money, or nearly all. But what of that? Family doesn't matter in these days; and I've no great right to stickle about the matter. It's

true that when I'm bullied I go back to the bishop of Queen Elizabeth. But *entre nous*, I've grave doubts about it. Certainly there are a good many missing links. I can only be sure of the serjeant-at-law of Queen Anne, and that isn't much, though he did bring Oakmere into the family; and I've a horrid suspicion that *his* father was a tradesman in an adjoining county. We ask no questions as to ancestry now. It's only the insurance offices who are curious on that subject, and then only to find out whether or not one's progenitors died of consumption or insanity: not out of any respect for a pedigree."

"I thought you'd let Oakmere to that prig Lomax, of the Wafer Stamp Office. I beg your pardon, I forgot he was your brother-in-law."

"He's my brother-in-law, and a prig too, and he's tenant of Oakmere—what does that matter? Of course, when I marry, he turns out. My living there as a bachelor would be too absurd."

"Hum. Do you know, Arnold, I think we'd better pass to the sentimental side of the question. Somehow, I don't see *you* in all these motives, and they only make me giddy."

"You're right, Jack. I was only submitting to convention. The modern view of marriage

is that it's a transaction, or a partnership, from which both members of the firm are to derive commercial advantages. Men are for ever taking up this sort of tone now; but then men are always making themselves out to be both wiser and worse than they really are—it's the reaction from cant—it's the converse of hypocrisy—sham venality—the compliment that virtue pays to vice. For we live in a very polite, easy-going age. We bow and smile when we used to call names and cudgel. We rather like to hold a candle to the old gentleman now and then—two candles, if he prefers it. You see he's a very old institution, and it's safest to be well with him. One can't tell what may happen."

"I'm sure you've studied all this before-hand."

"No matter, if I have; I marry old Carr's daughter."

"Well, why?"

"Because I love her."

"Earnest?"

"Infidel. Yes. Why not?"

"Is it a great passion this time? Are we as tremendously *épris*—may I say spoony—as in the old days with Miss—what was her name?—Miss Angela ——?"

“Be quiet. No; I’ve got over the attitudinizing part of love. That old *grand sérieux* style of thing doesn’t do often; one goes in at first for a fancy sort of article. Very pretty, and attractive, and showy; but no wear in it, bless you—not a bit. I’ve got a stout, steady, broadcloth now, sir, that will last my life and look well to the last. That first love is like a first tooth: very pearly and charming; and a great fuss is made over it, of course; but it’s not very serviceable, and it drops out one fine morning, replaced by a better, stronger, more durable affair.”

“Well, here’s *her* health. Is she pretty?”

“Judge for yourself. Here’s a sketch of her: it’s rather slight, but I did it myself, and I’m to have more sittings.” (He produced a water-colour drawing from a portfolio.) “Don’t look upon it as finished.”

“A brunette! I think I like a brunette best. You talk to a blonde, but a brunette talks to you. It saves no end of trouble. By George! this is very capitally done. You’ve a great talent for this sort of free-handed sketchy work. How stunning that strong light is upon the waves of her hair. How well you’ve given the reflection

from that white gush of lace round her neck. You'd have made a hit in Art, Arnold. It's awfully jolly."

"For heaven's sake, sink the artist, look upon it as a man."

"She's pretty. Very pretty. Are her eyes really such a charming soft brown as that? Are her eyebrows so beautifully marked? Her nose so delicate in form? No; you've flattered her, of course."

"I have done her but half justice," said Arnold Page, stoutly.

"I beg your pardon. I was thinking you were already a husband. One ought not to expect candour from a lover. Anyhow, it's a very first-rate drawing, Arnold."

"Thank you. Now amuse yourself with that claret, while I put myself into a dress-coat and choker." And Mr. Page left the room.

"A very pretty little darling," mused his friend, still contemplating the portrait; "though, of course, she doesn't really come up to this. People, somehow, never do come up to their pictures. There's always something hid—some dodge about the business. Has he taken a three-quarter view of her because her eyes ain't

straight, or to conceal a slight defect on the off-side of her nose? Anyhow though, I think she must be nice-looking. Certainly she's very jolly colour; but that may be all his doing. She seems the sort of woman a fellow might be deuced happy with. He's a lucky dog, that Arnold. He'll be fortunate in his marriage as in everything else. But it will be an awful business for us others when he marries. We shan't see anything of him: a house in Belgravia—Mrs. P. in satin—and flunkeys in plush—grand dinners; you come away, and feel as though you'd just escaped from custody; the wife turns up her dear little nose, and thinks it's only right to wean her husband from the dreadful set he knew before their marriage; and A. P. is as much hid from us as though he'd gone up into the clouds. Sometimes I think I'll marry myself. Only I never seem to have any money; and the bride's aunts and uncles—what beasts the bride's aunts and uncles always are!—invariably regard that as an objection. Why will people make such a bore, and a nuisance, and an ignominy of marriage? But it's an awful world. Life's nothing but one great trouble."

He refilled his glass, and curled himself in his chair again more slothfully than ever.

“Look here, Jack Lackington,” said Arnold, full dressed, returning.

“Yes, I see, you look stunning.”

“I don’t mean that. I want you to listen to what I’m going to say. One talks a lot of fearful nonsense about all sorts of things. It’s as well to be serious for a little now and then. Don’t make any mistake about what I’ve been telling you. I marry for no nonsensical motive about estates, and Parliament, and politics, and that; it’s not for her fortune, but distinctly for herself, that I love old Carr’s daughter.”

“One loves every fortune, but one doesn’t love every girl,” murmured Jack Lackington, interrupting. But Arnold did not heed him.

“If she had not a rap in the whole world, I should love her, and I should marry her all the same. She’s a dear, good, tender little soul, whom, as a child, I played with and loved. I have known her quite from her baby days, and I’ll make her a good husband, and do all man can to make her happy—and that although I couldn’t make a long speech to her about my love, and could no more write verses to her—believing in them myself—than I could fly. It’s a sober sort of love I offer her; a little dull, perhaps; but it’s

not the less honest. There, old boy, I've done, and I'm off. I shall miss the overture for certain, and barely be in time for the grand duet, going as hard as I can pelt. Sit here as long as you like. You've got the cigar-box before you; if you want more claret, you know where to find it, and by all means help yourself. I shall be back after the opera, but it will be late; for *William Tell's* a prodigious length. I shan't go to the club; I hate the club at midnight. I shall have a smoke here before I turn in. If you get sick of waiting and make off, mind you close the door after you. Good-by."

"Good-by," said Mr. Lackington, without moving; and he added, as his friend left the room, "He was getting decidedly prosy, talking of his love and his marriage—de-cidedly prosy—no mistake at all about it."

For some time Mr. Lackington continued to sit, or to lounge rather, smoking cigars and sipping claret. A second bottle had been opened prior to the departure of Page. Apparently, Mr. Lackington was possessed with the importance of finishing this bottle.

"It's no use leaving any," he said, as he held it up to the light to see how much it contained;

“and it’s very tidy drink. Arnold has a neat taste in wines. So have I, for that matter; but, as I don’t know a confiding wine-merchant, I can’t say that it’s of much use to me.”

It was getting a little cold now as the night came over. Mr. Lackington moved uneasily in his chair, shivering rather.

“I wish Arnold were here. He’d shut the window for me.”

Presently there was a knock at the door.

“I wonder who that is! I suppose I ought to go and see. Never mind. If it’s important, they’ll go on knocking; if it isn’t, they’ll go away, and I shan’t have to move. I think I should prefer that.”

But the knocking continued. Slowly Mr. Lackington uncoiled himself and went to the door.

“Is Mr. Page in?” asked a strong, rather harsh voice.

A tall, gaunt-looking man, with ragged black whiskers, rusty clothes, his hat set carelessly on the back of his head—perhaps because he could not get his broad protuberant forehead into it—stood in the doorway.

“Oh, it’s you, Wood, is it? Won’t you come in?”

“Isn't Arnold in?”

“No, he's gone out—into society somewhere—the opera, I think he said. Come in.”

“No—I won't come in,” said the tall man addressed as Wood; but he entered as he said so, and Jack Lackington closed the door behind him.

“Where's Robin?” asked Wood.

“He's out somewhere. I think it's one of his practising evenings. He's very musical, you know.”

“Yes, I know. But it was Arnold I wanted to see: how is he?”

“Oh, he's all right. 'No, by the way, I'm forgetting. I can only give you bad news of him.”

“Bad news!—why, what's the matter?”

“Don't look so serious. He's the victim of a bad attack from which he'll probably not recover; at least, he'll feel the effects of it all his life.”

“Don't worry me with these infernal enigmas, which you think good jokes,” said Wood, sternly.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that Arnold's going to be married.”

“Is he, indeed? I'm sure I'm very glad to hear it.”

“Glad, are you? Yes, of course that's the

right, and conventional, and usual thing to say; it's what is expected of one. But that apart, I know I'm not glad—I know I'm deuced sorry."

"Why should you be sorry? Is there anything to be regretted in the marriage? I'm sure Arnold would do nothing that was unworthy of him, and that there must be every chance of his being happy, as he well deserves to be, in his marriage."

"Yes, that's all very well; but I like to look a little deeper into the matter than that. Do you know what it means, Arnold's getting married? Please to look at it from another point of view than the genial, pleasant, complimentary one that you are so fond of. Arnold's getting married means our losing him; it means his giving up this crib, and all the jollity of his life here; it means cutting us—together—dead. You don't suppose that Mrs. Arnold Page, whoever she may be—I've never seen her, for that matter, but I've not a doubt about the line of conduct she'll adopt—you don't suppose that Mrs. Arnold Page will care to see the grim mug of Mr. Hugh Wood reflected on the brilliant surface of her mahogany, or will be particularly anxious for the strong-smelling pipe of Mr. Phil Gossett perfuming her

house, or the sprawling figure of your humble servant tumbling her furniture. Don't you know what an intense stunner Arnold Page is, and don't you feel that his getting married is enough to plunge all us poor beggars into the deepest crape and the densest mourning? By George! sir, there'll never be another ray of sunshine in this place when Arnold's out of it—the birds will leave off singing, the fountain will give over playing, the river will sparkle no more—it will all be as dreary as a prison; our lives without Arnold Page will be like a picture by an old master—with all its golden glazing peeled off.”

“You're a very selfish fellow, Lackington, it seems to me,” said Hugh Wood, gravely.

“Well, isn't selfishness natural—isn't it good to be natural?”

“I think it's good to rejoice in a friend's happiness, and not to turn away moodily, wrapping oneself up in twopenny regrets that one's personal comforts and likings may be a little interfered with. Can't you think more of Arnold Page and less of Jack Lackington?”

“I can't, honestly. To me, the latter—a trumpery dog, no doubt—seems very much the first to be considered.”

“I don’t understand you, Lackington—I tell you frankly,—and I don’t think I ever shall, any more than I shall ever understand your art, as it appears in those pictures on the wall yonder. It seems to me a very poor thing, at a time when Arnold’s happiness is in the scale, to be weighing against it the loss of the patron it may entail upon you, or the claret and cigars it will deprive you of.”

Jack Lackington flung the end of his cigar out of the window, with a brisker action than was usual with him, as he said,—

“Perhaps you don’t, as you say, understand me—and, of course, that’s a very good reason for abusing me. I don’t set up for much. I know I’m a lazy, idle, good-for-nothing sort of fellow, and that I’m fonder of lying on my back smoking, than I am of work; and that I’m hard up, and in debt, and seedy, and down-at-heel altogether; and that such art as I produce is incomprehensible to you—(that mayn’t be altogether such a bad compliment to the art as you perhaps imagine). I can admit all this; and more; that Arnold’s been a good friend to me, and bought pictures of me, perhaps because he understood and liked them, perhaps because he

didn't do either, but wanted to put money in my pocket, and bread in my mouth, and clothes on my back, and keep me straight generally and out of prison. I know all about all this—no one better. But it seems to me that if Arnold chooses to call me his friend, and make me welcome here, and give me all the claret and cigars in the place, it doesn't become Mr. Hugh Wood to step in and cry 'halt,' and put the cork in the bottle and shut up the cigar-box; that's my notion of the case, as it's my notion also, that if Arnold had need of the pictures, or any work that I could do for him, he should have had them without price being once thought of between us. Only as it is, money isn't much to him and it's a good deal to me. So he gives it to me, and I take it; and it doesn't occur to either of us that we've been the least soiled by the transaction."

Hugh gazed at the artist, amazed, evidently at so unaccustomed a manifestation of earnestness.

"I said more than I ought," he remarked, quietly; "put it down please to my not understanding you."

"I will," and Mr. Lackington's languid manner returned. "I'm not a fighting-man, Hugh. I

make you a present of that information. I sometimes hold up my fists bravely enough; but I always put them down again, if I find the other side really means business. I daresay what you said was right enough. Sit down and smoke."

"No; it's tempting Providence. We don't like each other; we understand that: we should only quarrel. I'll be off. I merely wanted to tell Arnold that I was going to spend part of the vacation in Woodlandshire, and to ask if I could do anything for him."

"I'll tell him if he comes back before I leave."

Hugh Wood moved to the door; but he returned to say, in a softer, kinder tone than he had hitherto employed,

"By the way, Lackington, if you're really hard up, can I lend you some money?"

"Well," the artist replied, after a pause; "five shillings *would* be an accommodation."

With a puzzled air, as though half afraid that he was being laughed at, Wood drew a handful of silver from his pocket, and held it to Lackington.

"Well; thank you," he said, simply; "as you're so pressing, I'll make it seven and sixpence—an extra half-crown is always useful."

He picked out the money with a deliberation that seemed fairly to bewilder Hugh Wood.

“What’s the name of the lady Arnold is going to marry?” he asked, by way of saying something.

“She’s of a Woodlandshire family living near Arnold’s place. Carr, I think, he said the name was,” and Mr. Lackington filled his glass again.

This occupation perhaps prevented his remarking that Hugh Wood left the room with a pale face and a strange look in his eyes.

“The great question now is,” said the artist, once more alone, “whether it is or not worth while to open another bottle. Oh! if drawing the cork wasn’t such a trouble!”

CHAPTER II.

AN OPERA BY ROSSINI.

IF you can fancy a cherub who habitually stuck a disc of glass in his right eye, who had cultivated a streak of floss silk upon his upper lip; who had left off wings and taken to tiny shirtcollars, and a gauzy strip of white neckerchief; who had also, by an extraordinary process of development, put forth under his head a little light trunk, with limbs and extremities complete; making his height in all about five feet three inches, and his weight seven stones and two pounds: if, I say, you can fancy all this, why you then have a very respectable notion of the personal appearance of Lord Adolphus Fairfield (Lord Dolly he was commonly called: he was just the man to have his name abbreviated; people felt it was too long for him and did not fit him, and that it was necessary to dock it and run a tuck in it, as it

were), the grandson of the late, and the younger brother of the present, Marquis of Southernwood ; Lord Marigold, who filled the office of Chancellor of the Duchy of Brompton during the brief administration of the Earl of Birmingham, and to whom, as the reader is, of course, well aware, the country is indebted for that admirable provision known as the Marigold clause, contained in the Franchise Bill, and of so vital an importance to the interests of the half-a-crown householders, having predeceased his father, the late Marquis of Southernwood, some years: falling a victim, indeed, to an acute cerebral disorder at Naples in the spring of 18— (*vide* Burke). The body, embalmed and brought home, was interred with much splendour in the mausoleum attached to Gashleigh Abbey, the family seat, in the county of Woodlandshire. By his marriage with the Honourable Blanche Guinever, daughter of John Logwood, second Baron Lambeth, his lordship had issue one son, George Arthur Lancelot Gaston, who succeeded in due course to the titles of his father and grandfather, and is, indeed, at this period of our history, the present (being the sixth) Marquis of Southernwood. It is to the brother of this distinguished nobleman that

we have now the honour of introducing the reader.

Lord Dolly Fairfield's little hands were covered with the smartest and smallest of blush-tinted gloves; they were made expressly for him; (I could name the shop at which he obtained them, but I should require to be paid heavily for an announcement so much in the nature of an advertisement;) his little feet were cased in the trimmest and brightest of lacquered boots; his flaxen locks were arranged in the daintiest curls; if I dared I would say that he was the prettiest little nobleman that ever was seen. At the mess-table of the 600th Light Dragoons (of which crack regiment he was a distinguished officer,) he was known as "Cupid" and "Tiny." He was too good-natured to resent these liberties. He was always laughing his pleasant noisy school-boy laugh—about an octave of notes—all musical and agreeable; and he seemed quite as well pleased, (unlike some eminent jesters,) to laugh at himself as at any one else. And the courage of the little gentleman was beyond dispute. He was a mere child when the 600th went into action in the south-east of Europe on the occasion of a great charge being made by the

British cavalry. His superior officers were left dead upon the field, but the boy cornet rallied the remnant of his troop, and was able to bring them in tolerable order from under fire. He was wounded in three places, but he never lost heart nor presence of mind, nor, it was said, his glass from his right eye. There was no question about the pluck of little Lord Dolly after that eventful day.

Smiling and nodding many recognitions, Lord Dolly made his way with some difficulty and stumbling over hats, and feet, and crinolines, to his stall at the opera. His graceful bows of apology and conciliation on the occasion of any little contretemps of this nature were delightful to witness. He tripped along with volatile ease and eventually tossed himself lightly, as though he had been an omelette, into his arm-chair. He looked about him for a few moments, then thrust two of his fingers into the large hand of a tall, abstracted gentleman, occupying the next seat, as he whispered,—

“Hullo! Chalker, old man, how are you?”

His friend, I may say, at once, for I deprecate needless mystery, was the Honourable Dudley Chalker, eldest son of Lord Sandstone. Chalker

was a melancholy-looking man, with weak eyes and a strong moustache ; his nose projected and his chin receded a little too much for intellectual expression ; the parting of his hair was so beautifully and accurately in the centre of his head, that it looked as though a result so marvellous must have been obtained by machinery ; he passed for handsome in certain circles, and entertained a strong opinion upon that subject himself. He tried to smile upon his lively little friend ; the result of his efforts was not a success ; indeed, it might almost have been called a painful exhibition.

Lord Dolly, it must be confessed, did not pay much heed to the music. He was busy with a colossal opera-glass, examining the occupants of the boxes—"spotting his friends" he termed the process.

The theatre was a London opera-house, with a European reputation for the excellence of its performances. The bills at the door announced in bright green letters the opera of the evening to be Rossini's *Guglielmo Tell*.

The conclusion of the first act permitted Lord Dolly to talk with greater freedom and noise.

"Rum lot of people here to-night, ain't there, Chalker? Evidently a party from Houndsditch

up there with the diamonds on the first tier. Eminent butcher, I should say, in the stage box. Who's got into Plumer's stall? He ain't such a bad sort of fellow, Plumer, you know, is he? But that man must be his tailor, I should think. *Do* look at his shirt-front, my dear Chalker, *do*, as a personal favour. I knew that Plumer owed him money, but I didn't think that he was going to pay him in this sort of way. Seems to me they let anybody in just now at the butt end of the season. The house is pretty full though, isn't it? only they won't bear looking into much; not with a glass. Where *did* they pick up that dear old lady in the Veres' box? My eye! what a turban! Everybody's going away—that's the fact. I suppose you'll be off soon, Chalker, won't you? Going to the family dungeon in Wales this time? I pity you! I know what that is. Southernwood wanted to come that dodge over me, only I wouldn't stand it. I had enough of Gashleigh Abbey in the winter. They go in so awfully for High Church, and that sort of thing now, you know: it's the marchioness's doing. If Southernwood ever asks you to dine with him on a Friday, take my advice, and don't you go. Nothing but salt fish, sir: second course, prayer-

books served up with hymn sauce, I call it. It's pious, perhaps, but it isn't filling, not at the price. He ain't such a bad sort of fellow, though, you know, Southernwood: stumped up like a man when I got into that hole about little Solomon's bill. You weren't here on Saturday. We had a new woman in the *Puritani*; not bad-looking, by any means—but such ancles! They say she's a good singer, though, and we're to have her next year. I thought myself she was rather a squaller; but the people seemed to like her. Yes; I was to have gone away with Flukemore in his yacht, with Storkfort, Clipstone, and a lot more fellows. I don't know why we go, I'm sure. We all hate yachting, I do believe: I know we're always awful ill. We were to do the Mediterranean or Spitzbergen, or somewhere: I forget the name of the place; but old Flukey he gets muddle-headed somehow; never thought about Parliament being dissolved—up, you know: goes walking about Piccadilly as bold as brass. Of course Barney Levy was on to him in a moment. Poor Flukey! he was quite knocked over with astonishment. He's done nothing but cry out, 'By Jove!'—you know his way—every five minutes, ever since. We shall get him out to-

morrow, though, if no more detainers have come in. He ain't such a bad sort of fellow, Fluke-more, you know. That looks deuced like little Polly Trevor there in the pit-tier. Don't you see?—in a blue wreath; black-muzzled party with her; dirty hands and diamond rings—that sort of thing; something in the Manchester warehouse line, I should say.”

Lord Dolly, it will be seen, had a pleasant flow of conversation. In this respect, he had decidedly the advantage of his friend, the Honourable Dudley Chalker, whose powers of speech were limited, or who made but slight calls upon his vocabulary. Mr. Chalker confined himself almost entirely to two words, or rather utterances. He jerked out “Aw!” when he desired to convey acquiescence or approval, while to express dissent or reprobation, he produced a sound something like “Baw!” It was astonishing what long conversations he was able to maintain by means of these two simple sounds, especially when the person he conversed with possessed the volubility of little Lord Dolly.

“You look a little seedy, Chalker, old boy, I think. I'm afraid you overdo it with soda-water, you know. It's very nice, but a fellow

can't live on it; and having it brought to you in bed is, I think, an excess. Is it true that the governor found out about the deferred annuity? It was deucedly well managed: did the Ostrich Insurance Office no end of credit, only Sandstone's such an infernally wide-awake old bird. You see, he's done all that sort of thing himself. Hullo! the Carrs haven't gone away yet. You know them, don't you, Chalker? Nice sort of people; simple and that, you know: no humbug, or pretence, or anything of that kind. That little girl will be worth a doose of a lot of money, I believe. 'Pon my soul, she's very pretty; don't you think so, Chalker? Oh, you like those great lumpy blonde women with ringlets, like Flukemore's mother-in-law. She really is a charming little girl, though. I sometimes feel quite spoony about her. I know Southernwood was very anxious for me to take up the case. But, you see, Arnold Page is in it; at least, so everybody says. You know him. He ain't such a bad sort of fellow, you know, Arnold:—rather eccentric, and that. Cut his rooms in the Albany to go and live down in the city somewhere—the Temple, I believe. Queer fellow! Going in to be Lord Chancellor, or something of that sort

I suppose: got a wig and gown all ready. He has—'pon my soul! showed them me; kept in in a box in his library. Very eccentric—but a good sort—knows a queer lot of people; artists, you know, and singers, and that. He does all that sort of thing himself, you know—very well, too—deuced clever! I often wonder he don't send things to *Punch*. Why, he's up there in the Carrs' box. Yes; I'm afraid that's a decided case. He's a good-looking fellow, Arnold, don't you think so, Chalker? I'll go up and talk to the Carrs after the next act. By George! how those Cholmondeley girls have gone off—do look! Why, they're quite pale and scraggy; and they've only been out two seasons—shocking! only just left off sugar-plums, and going in for liver pills already. By George! its serious."

The box occupied by the Carrs was on the tier above the grand tier. It was engaged for every Tuesday of the subscription, and was well situated on the curve of the theatre. Mr. and Mrs. Carr wore a homely aspect; there was between them the likeness so often to be remarked between a husband and wife, who have passed together many years of married life. The assimilation of habits of thought and action had

produced at last a resemblance of expression and even feature. They were elderly people, solid, rather stolid-looking. Mr. Carr crowned a creased red face with a flaxen wig of an old-fashioned pyramidic form, that well covered his forehead, and interfered a little with his tufted grey eyebrows; these repeated the angular line of his wig, rising to a point some inches above his nose—of the flabby Roman order—and imparting a resigned and melancholy expression to his face. He sat in a compact mass—very still—giving drowsy attention to the music, and as though motion would break some important spell, and the downfall of his wig, or the crumpling up of his collar or cravat, or shirt-front would result. His hands, in loosely-fitting white gloves, with a superfluous inch, like a harmless talon, projecting at the end of each finger, he kept constantly before him folded one above the other in a neat and compact parcel. He had the appearance of being very harmless and respectable and a little overfed. The same characteristics distinguished his wife. She was gorgeously attired in maroon velvet. She wore a blonde head-dress a trifle excessive in regard to flowers, and on her shoulders a superb orange-tawny India shawl.

In her youth, many years back, she had been noted for the beauty of her raven tresses. For some inscrutable reason, unless it was as a matter of compliment to the taste of her husband, she now substituted for these a front of light flaxen, retained in its place by a fillet of black velvet and a diamond. She was kind-hearted and good-natured, although inclined to fits of silence and dulness that looked almost like aberration of mind. For this, however, explanation might be offered. She could never be said to have fairly recovered the loss of her only and darling son, Jordan Carr, who had been unfortunately drowned, while bathing at Oxford, some ten years prior to the date at which our history has commenced. To this poor young man and his melancholy fate the good old lady's thoughts were continually recurring. Hence, perhaps, her frequent attacks of speechlessness and dejection.

The only surviving child of the Carrs was the child of their old age, a daughter, Leonora Agnes Carr, born many years after their son Jordan. Most tenderly did they cherish this their only treasure. For the old gentleman he quite idolized his little Leo.

She was a beauty ; if it be permissible to put

size altogether on one side as having nothing to do with the question: for she was very little. Contemplate her as she occupies the best chair in the opera-box; her parents persistently in the background as though thrown into shadow by the radiance of her loveliness. A dainty little brunette, with a complexion not hard and tough as that of some dark beauties I wot of, whose only chance of producing colour on their dusky cheeks is by a thick application of it artificially on the outside; but fine, and satiny, and delicate in texture, permitting now and then a beautiful rosy underflush to glow through it; luminous, melting brown eyes, made still more soft in colour by the shadow of her superb fringe of silken eyelashes; her features small and delicate, the mouth being quite perfection in form and colour; the shape of her head admirable; the profuse dense brown hair growing in a charming curved line with a peak in the centre, rather low on her forehead, as the hair of the brunette beauty should always grow; her eyebrows well marked, her figure, though very slight in frame, very limber and graceful in movement. When she turned or bent quickly you did not hear the creaking of cordage, pulleys and busks—awful sound, which accompanies the change

of position of certain graceful creatures, whose waists and shoulders have been brought by ingenuity into quite the three-cornered tart style of female figure, and are of course, as a consequence, greatly admired by the world in general. Upon her head Leonora wore no ornament save that natural one of her soft hair, dexterously twisted and plaited and twined in shining cables at the back. Round her neck was a cord of gold suspending a locket set with diamonds. Her slender wrists were decked with bracelets of coral and dead gold. Through her lace dress was to be seen the rich gleams of maize-coloured satin; while her ample skirts were caught and confined by bunches of corn-flowers. Her toilette altogether was excellent in taste and effect and did great credit to all concerned in it. (I may as well say at once that to secure accuracy in regard to all matters of millinery that may from time to time be under mention in the course of this narrative, and to obviate all chance of impeachment upon a subject of importance so vital, the proof sheets have been submitted to the careful supervision of an eminent court dressmaker in Bond Street, whose decisions as coming from an adept would of course be recognized as final anywhere. In the same way

I have not ventured to introduce any topic of a legal character without having first obtained the assurance of an eminent sheriff's officer, that the law as stated by me was beyond all question.)

Leonora Carr leant upon the damask cushions of the box, listening to the honied music of Rossini. Perhaps after a pretty woman's smile, the next charming thing is a pretty woman's frown. Just as the best singers can execute musical difficulties without disfiguring the arrangement of their features, so a pretty woman can frown and still look very winning and beautiful indeed. There was the slight plait of a frown upon the brow of Leonora. The immediate effect upon the spectator of the air of melancholy so produced was an earnest desire to kiss the red lips of the little lady very tenderly, and ask her what was the matter. To my certain knowledge there were six gentlemen in the stalls, their ages varying from twenty-two to seventy, and ten in the pit (one of them being connected with a newspaper), who were moved by a burning anxiety to go through such a proceeding. But another moment and they might turn away their opera-glasses; there was no longer need for their intervention, Leonora's frown had vanished. A gentleman had

entered the Carrs' box. The sunny beauty of Leonora's smile! Look to the stage, gentlemen of the stalls and pit. That smile of happiness is not for you!

"Dear Arnold, how late you are!"

So the gentleman who entered the box was greeted. He pressed the hands of both Mr. and Mrs. Carr, and then the tiny fingers of Leonora; as though he had kept the best for the last, after the manner of judicious school-boys with respect to their choicest sweetmeat.

The old people made room for him; they retreated still farther to the background of the box; Arnold Page took the vacant chair in the front, close to pretty Miss Leonora.

"I thought you were to come and dine with us?" said the lady, rather reproachfully. "I expected you; why didn't you come, sir?"

"Forgive me, Leo dear, I was prevented. Some one called, I couldn't well get away, and Westbourne's such a long way off."

"That horrid Temple," she murmured, and she pouted. I have made mention of both her frown and her smile. Well, her pout in point of attraction, was somewhere midway between the two; possessing certain of the charms of both.

"Town gets very empty," said Arnold, looking through his opera-glass round the house. "I see our friend Dolly's still here, though. I suppose the yachting expedition he was telling us of has gone off. Do you like this opera, Leo?"

"Yes, very much," she answered, with rather an air of indifference though, it must be owned.

"How well Tamberlik's singing to-night," said Arnold. "I don't think I ever heard him in better voice. I'm glad I got in time for the 'Dove sono;' I heard Duprez in this part some years back in Paris, but I don't think I liked him so much: true, he was gone by then. He had more passion, but I don't think he was so musical as Tamberlik. What an exquisite air this 'Chère Mathilde' is! I do believe it's one of the finest love-songs ever composed. It's almost as sublime as the 'Il mio tesoro' of Mozart."

Leonora was pouting again. Indeed the pout grew to a frown at last, as she said,

"Don't talk like a newspaper critic," she said.

Arnold laughed good-naturedly.

"Don't laugh at me either, sir."

"What shall I do, then?" Her little hand

came near him on the cushion. It was concealed from the audience by a superb bouquet; Arnold gave the little hand ever so gentle a little squeeze. The frown dwindled into a pout which subsided into a glorious smile. Leonora looked perfectly satisfied and happy again.

“There’s only one more Tuesday,” she said, “and perhaps then we shall not be in town—only think—this may be our last opera night; so I want you to be very good, and nice, and kind to me. I shan’t be sorry to go away, I’m getting rather tired of London. I don’t know where we shall go to; some quiet sea-side place, I suppose, where I shall read all the novels I’m supposed to have read this season—at least all of them I can get from the circulating library—and I shall sit on the beach all the morning, and wear a hat. Ah! such a hat, so pretty; with such a dear little scarlet feather! if you’re very good, I’ll show it to you the next time you come to Westbourne Terrace. And we’re to go down to Woodlandshire. It’s dull there, but very pretty; and I shall make great friends this time with dear Mrs. Lomax. You know why, sir; and I’ve promised before I go to

drive down to Kew to see little Edith and Rosy at Miss Bigg's school. Your nieces, sir."

"*Your* nieces, too," Arnold interrupted, laughing, "or shall we say *our* nieces?"

"Be quiet, sir," and Leonora laughed too, with very brilliant eyes. "You must be very good, or else I shall change my mind about that. I'll drive down to-morrow if it's fine. Have you any message, uncle Arnold?"

"No, aunt Leo; I know you will take care of the sugar-plum department. I've, therefore, only kisses to send to the little ducks. I'll give them to you: twelve for Edith, and twenty for little Rosy; you shall have them by-and-by. Take care to remind me to give them to you, in case I should forget."

"I'll ask mamma if that's a proper observation. I'm sure people didn't talk like that when she was a girl. Do you think that Madame —— is pretty? I think she is, decidedly. Her voice is beautiful; only Mathilde is not a very good part, is it? One thing's quite clear, she doesn't know what to do with her train. Who's that next to Lord Dolly in the stalls?"

"His friend Chalker, Dudley Chalker. He's related distantly to Lomax."

"Oh, I know! he danced with me at the Veres'. Isn't he rather a silly? I think he is; he did nothing all through the quadrille but pull his moustache."

"Ask Arabella Vere what her opinion is on that subject."

"I don't believe Arabella cares the least tiddy bit about him. You men are always fancying that girls are in love with you."

"Well! I suppose they are sometimes."

"Very seldom, indeed; I should think it's a most unusual occurrence." And Leonora gave a very bright kindly glance—perhaps to prevent Arnold's putting too serious a construction upon her words; and added a silvery little laugh, still further for his comforting; and presently I think the little hand was having another little squeeze behind the bouquet.

Arnold turned to the background figures in the box; he had been neglecting them rather.

"Do you like this music, Mrs. Carr?" he inquired.

"Charming, charming," the old gentleman answered, rousing himself, thinking probably that the question was addressed to him. And he began to make believe great interest in what

was going on; and to nod his head to the music in a way that rather endangered his pyramidic wig, and to beat time with an extended finger.

“It’s pretty; very pretty,” said Mrs. Carr. vacantly. “I’m fond of music. I don’t know anything about it, but I’m fond of it. I never could play myself, but I always liked to hear others play. Leonora plays sweetly on the piano; she was taught by Signor Fuoco, at Miss Bigg’s school, and afterwards had lessons of the celebrated Da Capo. My son Jordan—you’ve heard me speak of him I dare say, Arnold, though I don’t think you ever knew him; he’d have been just your age if he’d lived, your age to a day, Arnold—my son Jordan had great musical ability; he played on the cornopean and the German flute: and played beautifully—entirely by ear, he was self-taught. Jordan would have liked this opera; he could play part of the overture on the piano with one hand; it sounded beautifully with the soft pedal down. Carr, dear, move your chair, you’re on my dress. Leo, darling, you look pale. Would you like my salts?”

The old lady had a way of speaking rapidly a few sentences without pause between them, and

then relapsing into complete quietude just as a clock which only strikes after long intervals of silence. And it was very rarely that she spoke without mention of her late son Jordan. To Arnold it may be said she always evinced an almost maternal affection, probably for the reason that he constantly reminded her of her lost darling, who would have been the same age to a day had he lived, as she was often stating. She sometimes even would maintain that there was a strong likeness between the two—though this was believed to be a matter of sheer delusion on the part of the old lady. Certainly whenever she appealed to her husband for confirmation of her idea, he would always reply kindly but simply,

“No, Agnes dear; I don’t see the likeness. I have told you so before.”

But she none the less persisted in her opinion.

“I hope Lord Dolly will come up and see us, don’t you, Ar?” said Leo. “I shouldn’t like to leave London without saying good-by to him.”

“Oh, he’s sure to come up, I should think; he always does, you know. I’ll go and fetch him if he doesn’t come soon.”

“I like little Lord Dolly, don’t you, Ar?”

"It's impossible to help liking him. He's such a good little fellow. He's a great friend of mine."

"He's a darling to waltz with. You're such a monster. You're a great deal too big for waltzing. Do you know that, Ar?"

"You can't think what an intense comfort it is to me."

"Where *are* you turning your opera-glass. Oh, I know: you're looking for your friends in the gallery! How can you, Arnold?"

"I'm not a bit ashamed of them, Leo."

"But you don't call them *gentlemen*, do you, Ar?" and the little lady began to pout again.

"I call them my friends, Leo. Isn't that a sufficient answer?"

Leo glanced at him quickly, probably to ascertain if he were really in earnest, perhaps to question too a certain rather sharp ring in his voice.

"I think you must be a Radical, sir. I shall talk to papa upon that subject, and ascertain his opinions. I don't like Radicals. They want to make out that all people are equal, and that ladies ought to be taken down to dinner by coal-heavers, and dance with dustmen, and do unpleasant things of that kind. Isn't that what you want, Arnold?"

“Not quite, dearest. I’ve no very intimate friend in the coal-heaving interest, and I don’t think I should introduce him to you if I had. And I’m not at all a Radical, Leo. Don’t be at all alarmed. My political sentiments are quite safe and sound.”

“Oh, of course women don’t understand anything about politics,” and Leo tossed out her little chin with a droll air of impatience. “But I know who you’re looking for in the gallery, Mr. Red Republican. There’s *that* Mr. Hugh Wood, for one person.”

“You’ve nothing to say against him, I should think. You met him at the Comptons’, and his father’s a Woodlandshire rector.”

“I don’t like his father and I don’t like him. He’s very ugly, and he never knows what to say. Then there’s Mr. Lackington” (she laid in each case an ironical stress upon the *mister*)—“you see I know all their names—a pre-Raphaelite painter—isn’t that what he calls himself? I’m sure I tried hard to understand his pictures because you seemed to think so much of them, though they were hung up so high at the Academy, and I thought them very foolish and affected, and not at all nice and pretty, as I

like pictures to be. And I saw you shaking hands with Mr. Lackington,—such a shabby, badly-dressed, *gauche* young man. Then there's Mr. Gossett, a medical man, isn't he, Ar? I've never seen him; but he must be an awful creature from all accounts. And Mr. Hooper, a farmer's son, one of papa's tenants, a poor little humpbacked——”

“Leo!” Arnold interrupted, in a tone of reproach.

“I beg your pardon, Ar, but you know I can't like him. He frightened my pony once down in the park at home, and I was very nearly thrown.”

“But he stopped the pony for you afterwards.”

“Yes, he did; and I was very much obliged to him; but still, you know, I don't think I could ever like him; that is, not much—and, then, a farmer's son, you know, Ar! What makes you like them, Ar? I should like to like what you like, if I only could.”

“I'm afraid their great offence in your eyes, Leo, is that they are not often met with in society, and that they go to the gallery of the opera-house, because they are fond of music,

and find it cheaper up there than down below in the stalls, next to brilliant Mr. Chalker. If you prefer Chalker to Hugh Wood, and Lackington, and Robin Hooper, why I don't, that's all, Leo."

"Don't be cross with me, sir. I don't prefer Mr. Chalker—I don't like Mr. Chalker. But I do like Lord Dolly."

"Hush! here he is."

"How d'ye do, Mrs. Carr? How d'ye do, Miss Carr? How d'ye do, Mr. Carr? How are you, Arnold?" And his little lordship was pressing their hands with his slender fingers, laughing his merry boy's laugh, bowing and bending, pouring out his usual stream of pleasant small talk with a fashionable seasoning of "chaff," his gibus under his arm, his colossal opera-glass in his left hand, and, of course, his glass in his eye.

"Like this opera, Miss Carr? Oh, yes; first-rate you know—classical music—good as Beethoven—that sort of thing; but just a little heavy—ever so little, don't you think so? Yes; capital singer, Tamberlik. No end of a good singer—getting a little fat though, don't you think? Good fun when the man what's-his-name shoots the apple off his son's head. First-rate—know

how it's done? No; he don't fire off at all—arrow comes out of the apple, through the post at the back. Good trick, eh? Pretty-looking woman danced the Tyrolienne to-night, wasn't she? Soon leave town now, I suppose, Mrs. Carr? You'll be glad to get into the country again, I daresay. Oh, yes—long season—knocked up—awful bore—that sort of thing. Lose the best part of the season in London? Yes; so we do, very foolish, and absurd, and that. Weather's changing now—getting quite autumn—dear me, yes. What are our chances as to grouse this year, Mr. Carr? Yes; I was going yachting with Flukemore—postponed the thing for the present. Don't think I shall be down in Woodlandshire until the winter. Much obliged. Yes; I'll certainly ride over to the Chase, if I should come down. Where are you going, Arnold? Tyrol—Alps—that sort of thing. Very true—sick of it myself. Switzerland does get chuck-full of snobs, somehow. Sort of continental Margate—that sort of thing. Are you going to contest Woodlandshire? not this time, I suppose. You'd have Southernwood's support, I think. Yes, Miss Carr, it was Dudley Chalker; he's been admiring you awful—made quite a conquest of him, I assure you. No,

Littledale went away without proposing. Poor Fanny Forde quite ill in consequence—old Forde raging like a mad bull—made sure of his daughter being a countess. No ; it's quite true, 'pon my word. Bra ! Br-r-ra ! Fine fellow, Tamberlik. He don't sing the 'Suivez moi' badly, does he, Miss Carr ? I wish I could chuck up my voice and catch it again like that. Are you going ? You'll be sure to give my kind regards to Mr. and Mrs. Lomax, when you see them. Hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again. Not next Tuesday ? Dear me, the theatre *will* look empty without you." And so on.

"Don't leave us at the door of the theatre," Leonora whispered coaxingly to Arnold. "Come round to Westbourne Terrace, do, there's a dear. I've so many things to say to you."

"Come out after the opera, Arnold, old man, and have a cigar, will you ? or come on to the club, or to the Albany. I've got some decent hock now—Southernwood sent it to me ; or we'll go a little round, if you like, for a change. We'll get old Chalker to come too. He ain't such a bad sort of a fellow, Chalker, you know—is he ?"

But Arnold found the lady's proposition the more tempting.

"I think going round by Westbourne must be quite the nearest way to the Temple," he said, laughing.

"Well, but the carriage can take you there afterwards. Papa will speak to Andrews about it."

"No, darling, we won't make Andrew's life a burden to him. It's a fine night, I believe; and I can easily get a cab from Oxford Street."

"You ought to kept a cab, Arnold. I'm sure you'd find it very convenient."

"I tried it once; but I found it very troublesome. Somehow the cab was always at one end of the town when I was at the other. It seemed to me at last that I was only keeping it to enable my tiger to enjoy carriage exercise. I thought that reason was barely a sufficient one, so I put down the cab."

"When Jordan was at Oxford he used to drive a tandem," Mrs. Carr said. "Jordan drove beautifully, though he was sometimes upset. He was fond of very spirited horses. I was frightened to death to see him drive. But his father and myself always agreed that he should be humoured in everything that was reasonable. He'd have been just your age if he'd lived, Arnold; your age to a day. No; I never drive myself—not now—

I used to drive a pony phaeton round our park, but I'm not equal to it now. Leo dear, you'd better have that window up or you'll catch cold, coming out of the hot theatre. Poor Jordan once caught a dreadful cold from merely sitting with his back to an open window. Do you remember, Carr?"

"Yes, Agnes, I remember," said the old gentleman, quietly.

"I nursed him for weeks. Dear me, how ill he was." And Mrs. Carr relapsed again into silence.

"That's a regular case, you know, Chalker, old man, between that fellow Arnold and that little girl—a regular case; and a very nice little girl she is too, let me tell you, Chalker—not at all a bad sort of girl in point of fact. A man might do a deuced sight worse. I call her a—a howling poppet!"

This designation of little Miss Carr, from its possessing a sort of Ojibbeway smack, or from some other remarkable characteristics, evidently struck the Hon. Dudley Chalker as being intense and forcible. It had all the effect upon him that a blow in the chest might be expected to produce

upon an ordinary man. He lost his breath to begin with ; he opened his weak eyes very widely indeed, pulled wildly at his moustache, and ejaculated "Aw!" three distinct times, with effusion ; as a supplementary demonstration of surprise, he next took to blinking violently for some minutes.

Lord Dolly was apparently all the better for the relief to his feelings occasioned by his open expression of opinion relative to Leonora Carr. He returned to the consideration of everyday interests.

"This is the neatest thing you've had in cheroots, Chalker, for no end of time. It does you great credit."

The little nobleman blew as big a cloud as a giant might have blown.

"To-morrow we must see about getting old Flukey out of that lock-up. It makes a fellow awful nervous though, trusting himself in those places ; one never knows what may happen. Suppose, you know, Chalker, they were to nobble on to me!"

Chalker murmured—"Baw!"

The utterance seemed to be as eloquent as the occasion demanded.

"I want to speak to you, Ar, before you go," said Leonora, joining him in the hall as he prepared to leave the house in Westbourne Terrace.

"What is it, Leo?" he asked, kindly.

She took his hand, pressing it gently between her two soft little palms.

"Have I done wrong to-night, Ar; tell me?"

"No, dearest; how can you do wrong?"

"But I have; I've said things I ought not to have said. I have spoken of your friends badly—and it was foolish and wicked of me—and you, Ar, so good and kind to me always. I had no right to say what I did. Forgive me, Ar; I won't do it again, at least, I'll try not to. Forgive me."

"Silly little Leo," said Arnold, smoothing her silky tresses, "there is nothing to forgive."

"Yes, but there is."

"Why will you think so seriously of such nonsense?"

"It isn't nonsense. But I see you forgive me; thank you, Ar. And you won't think the worse of me for what I said? You won't love me the less?"

"Surely not, Leo."

The soft brown eyes looked strangely bright

even through a veil of tears, but this on the whole perhaps decked rather than dimmed their lustre. A pause of a minute.

"You may kiss me, Ar, if you like," she said, gently, with a little winning smile running along the line of her lips. She held up her face: so that he shouldn't have to stoop too low, perhaps.

What a commingling of innocence and half-conscious coquetry and tenderness and merriment, the tears still dewing her eyelashes!

Mr. Arnold Page availed himself of the privilege permitted him. Probably under like circumstances most people would have done as he did.

"Darling little Leo!" he said, as he looked about for a cab to take him to the Temple.

Soon after he added—

"I wonder if that fellow Lackington has left my place yet? I feel inclined for a cigar and a chat before turning in."

He found Mr. Lackington in the chambers in Sun Dial-buildings, but asleep on a sofa with an empty bottle at his side. He was in the dark; he had been too lazy to light a candle.

"It will be a shame to disturb him; but it will be better for him to have the window shut," said

Arnold Page, and he closed the window, leaving the painter to his repose.

“Dear little Leo!” he said again. She was a pleasant subject to return to, unquestionably.

We need not follow further the steps of Lord Dolly and his friend, nor is it immediately material to the objects of our history whether or not Flukemore obtained his liberty. Sufficient to say, for the present, that on the morning after his visit to the opera, the Honourable Dudley Chalker required a large dose of his favourite soda-water before he could be put upon his feet, and even then he was for a long time speechless, and not a very exhilarating spectacle. Some hours later, however, he was sufficiently recovered to show himself at his club (the Junior Adonis, St. James’s Street), and give a friendly “Aw,” to certain of his acquaintances there, including Lord Dolly—as pink and fresh, flaxen and trim, as a school-girl. No wonder they called him “Cupid;” he looked the part; only you are required to imagine the son of Cytherea as a modern, very fashionable divinity, attired in broadcloth, and “about town;” smoking cheroots when not sucking

his ivory-topped cane ; and a splendid seat upon a colossal, rakish-looking, bay blood mare, prancing in the Row—now thinning like the trees in the park, for the glory of the season had departed.

CHAPTER III.

THE MISSES BIGG'S SEMINARY FOR YOUNG
LADIES.

EDITH and Rosa, the daughters of Mr. Francis Lomax, of the Wafer Stamp Office, Whitehall, and of Great Upper Eaton Place, at present resident at Oakmere Court, Woodlandshire, the property of his brother-in-law, Mr. Arnold Page—Edith and Rosa, little girls of the respective ages of eleven and nine years, were pupils at the Misses Bigg's seminary for young ladies, Chapone House, Kew Green. This establishment was of no mean fame. It had been in existence many years. It was expensive—it was exclusive. It recognized in no way the “mutual system.” A coal-merchant could not place his daughter under the charge of the Misses Bigg—still less could he hope to pay for his child's education with so many tons of fuel per quarter. The Misses

Bigg steadily declined to receive into their academy the children of persons engaged in trade. They had even entertained doubts at one time in regard to the offspring of professional men. It was with a sigh that Miss Adelaide Bigg had accepted the charge of the two daughters of that eminent advocate Lisper, Q.C., of the Northern Circuit. She admitted, with tears in her eyes, that she perceived distinctly in that proceeding "the thin end of the wedge." But Miss Adelaide Bigg entertained strong opinions. She had been heard to declare that the secrets of scholastic success were exclusiveness—exclusiveness—exclusiveness. Her cry at one time had been the peerage, the whole peerage, and nothing but the peerage. She was one of those alarming creatures known as "superior women." She adhered to her opinions with a tenacity that had something terrible in it. But she was compelled to yield to what it pleased her to designate "the frightful inroads of democracy." She confessed that she had suffered deeply for the cause of the aristocratic families. It was believed that the books of the establishment could have shown a sad list of debts due to the Misses Bigg in respect of some of their most distinguished pupils.

She was found one morning quite dead in her chair. She had been reading the *Court Circular*. In the list of presentations at a drawing-room of the Sovereign, she had discovered the names of no less than six of her former pupils. It is not known how much loss in money those pupils represented.

The surviving sister, Miss Dorothea Bigg, was a less superior woman than the late Miss Adelaide. She had not the firmness of mind nor the dignity of manner, nor, it was said, the intellectual culture of her departed sister. It is possible, indeed, that the seminary was existing rather on the strength of its reputation in the past than because of the extent of its merits in the present. Yet Miss Dorothea did all in her power to cherish the fair fame of the institution. The children of commerce were still kept without the gates. The terms had not been reduced—the number of the pupils was still limited—the name of “the Misses Bigg” was still preserved on the door-plate, still headed the half-yearly bills and the prospectuses. The nobility and gentry were informed now, as of old, that at the Misses Bigg’s seminary, Chapone House, Kew Green, a limited number of young ladies were received. TERMS—One hundred

and fifty guineas per annum, including board and instruction in every essential of a sound English education. RELIGIOUS AND MORAL CULTURE under the immediate and personal superintendence of Miss Dorothea Bigg. (This had reference, probably, to an examination of the pupils every Sunday afternoon in the catechism and collect of the day. There were said to be reasons why Miss Bigg did not venture to interfere in any other educational matters. Certainly, her French was Britannic in point of accent, while, grammatically considered, it could only be called shaky.) The FRENCH, GERMAN, and ITALIAN languages constantly spoken, and French made the medium of instruction (whatever that might mean). The PIANO, HARP, GUITAR, DRAWING, PAINTING IN OIL AND WATER COLOURS, GERMAN, FRENCH, ITALIAN AND LATIN by first-rate professors, each twelve guineas. DANCING, three guineas a quarter. SEAT AT CHURCH, two guineas. USE OF INSTRUMENTS, two or three guineas, according to age. The USE OF THE GLOBES and CALISTHENICS, four guineas. LAUNDRESS, eight guineas. Charge for remaining during vacations, twelve guineas. A half year's notice required before the removal of a pupil. Each lady providing her own plate and linen.

While, after these announcements, the prospectus went on to state that "the Misses Bigg, deeply impressed with the intense responsibility devolving upon those to whom may be entrusted the absolute charge of children at a distance from their homes, desire that it may be understood that young people from abroad or the colonies consigned to their protection, it will be their especial care to make the objects of an untiring, affectionate, and maternal solicitude; not simply in so far as their educational progress may be concerned, but also in regard to the even more important considerations affecting their religious and moral welfare and training, their personal comfort and happiness, and their health, for the preservation and promotion of which last Chapone House presents peculiar advantages. It is most favourably situated, on a gravelly soil, overlooking the Royal Gardens of Kew, the air being at the same time both mild and bracing, and particularly recommended by the Faculty. References rigorously insisted on, and permitted to the Right Reverend Blackman Savage, Lord Bishop of Otaheite; the Venerable G. Todd, Archdeacon of Bunglowputty, East Indies; the Hon. J. Crow, Secretary of the Legation, Dixie's Land;

and to the numerous parents of pupils who have received the blessings of education at the Misses Bigg's Seminary, Chapone House, Kew Green."

This excellently planned prospectus had all the effect of what is called, I believe, "a strong bill" at the theatres. It attracted attention—it drew. The limited number of pupils was generally complete, even though it had been necessary for particular reasons to look a little lower than the aristocratic families, and to receive the children of the professional classes.

But among the Misses Bigg's pupils you could not always distinguish those who sprung from an aristocratic and those from a less precious stock. When Miss Leonora Agnes Carr was one of the limited number of young ladies, you would have been inclined, I think, to attribute to her an origin quite as *récherché* as that of the Hon. Maud Eve Elaine, only daughter of Hubert Lord Stonehenge. There had been no question about the reception of little Leonora into the school. Miss Dorothea was pleased, she said, to see Miss Carr an inmate of Chapone House; and she was able to rely for certain, as she well knew, on the periodical receipt of

old Mr. Carr's cheques in payment for the education of his child.

But the Misses Bigg had other claims to the estimation of the world. They were the daughters of the eminent poet Bigg, the author of that superb epic, so favourably noticed by all the Low Church reviews of the period, *The Course of Life*, in twenty cantos. (Alas! Dorothea would pronounce the word *canters*, now that Adelaide was no longer alive to correct her.) Bigg, in his youth the gentleman of *ton*, the friend of Fox and Sheridan, the companion of George the Debonair, a grand man and a handsome, as is evident from his portrait still hanging in the Misses Bigg's best drawing-room, at Chapone House—a massive personage with brilliant eyes and a fascinating smile, a bottle nose, and his hair well combed over his forehead: Bigg, the beauty, the girth and symmetry of whose leg had been even the envy of his sovereign, and, indeed, the subject of a bet on the part of that urbane monarch (was not Sheridan invited to decide the wager? and did he not give his opinion in favour of the superior size of calf being on the side of his royal master?—a partial judgment, as it was always believed, and for which

Bigg never forgave him)—Bigg, who in his maturity had repented of the unwisdom of his youth, and his money gone and the gout come in his hands and feet, had invoked the Muse—how successfully, there was his sublime work—that was the proper phrase to employ concerning it—to bear witness. It went rapidly through sixteen editions. “Can you ’ave anythink more sublime than that?” asked Binks, the publisher. *The Course of Life*, a soul poem, in twenty cantos. It was considered at certain prayer and tea parties a great thing that Bigg should have had a call so beneficial as was implied in the production of *The Course of Life*, while unquestionably it was a great thing for Bigg that he could make so advantageous a call upon the public as was comprehended in the sixteen editions of his great work. Did he not also receive a pension from the Earl of Birmingham’s government?—not a large sum, of course, but still sufficient to supply the bard with as much of his favourite snuff and beloved rum-punch as he could possibly require for the rest of his life—his needs in these respects not being trifling; while, *au reste*, he lived upon the exertions of his daughters, the Misses Bigg, of Chapone House. Altogether, Bigg had probably

enjoyed his life as much as most of us, and rather more than some. A youth of pleasure and an old age of comfort, and all at the expense of other people.

There are some Ministers who keep office under all forms of government. Bigg had hobnobbed in tokay with giddiness and gaiety; by-and-by he was enjoying tea and muffins with primness and prudery. Of course it's easy to be inconsistent and to change your convictions; the difficulty is to bring to a good market your altered opinions. Bigg was successful in this respect. He posed himself as a convert. Now, in the case of a convert, of course it is an advantage for him to have enjoyed previously as bad a character as possible. If we are to wash the black man white, let us have him as jetty as may be at starting, and there will be so much more credit in the concern; let us have a whole-bred negro rather than an octoroon. The well-known early naughtinesses of Bigg were so many testimonials in his favour. An influential evangelical congregation straightway took up Bigg, and he took up them and their sentiments hot and strong. He became a valuable member of their body. His success was tremendous. He lectured

in the chapels of the party. He could point to himself as at once the frightful example and the moral result of his own teaching. Money was turned away from the doors, and he crowned his triumph by the production of *The Course of Life* in twenty cantos. This is not the place to review that remarkable book. Its enormous sale has been already the subject of observation. Passages of it were set to music and sung in the chapels of the faithful. It was the gift-book of families of the persuasion ; and it was, of course, bound in calf, whole extra, with gilt edges, and, with the autograph of Miss Dorothea on the fly-leaf, one of the prizes bestowed upon successful students at Chapone House, Kew Green. I am afraid that some of these did not rate highly either the poetry or the piety of Bigg's book.

“Portrait of my father, at the age of thirty-seven, by Cadmium, R.A., well-known as the rival of Lawrence, exhibited at Somerset House in 18—” Miss Dorothea would say, for the edification of visitors, pointing a gristly, knuckly, black-mittened hand in the direction of the picture over the mantelpiece. “Black shade of the poet Bigg at the age of sixty-two, considered a wonderful likeness. My father when a boy,

with Epping Forest in the background; he was born in Essex, at the village of Chingford, in the year 17—. Water-colour study of my father when a child, by the celebrated artist, P. Maddier. My father, even quite as an infant, was remarkable for the beauty of his countenance; those works of art in the corner are two other portraits of the poet Bigg, by the eminent and fashionable amatoor, Prince Ernest Blisterhazy. My father with his hat on; my father with his hat off. Medallion portrait of my father, by Moulder, the sculptor; the shape of my father's head was generally considered to be very remarkable. The protooberances on the forehead are certainly singular; they are not in the least exaggerated. The bust on the staircase, which you passed as you came up, was by Chiswell, R.A., a very admirable work, slightly idealized, very highly estimated by persons of distinction; it was on seeing that bust that his majesty, the late King George the Fourth, struck by the likeness, gave an order for his own bust in his coronation robes to be executed by Chiswell. It was the same bust that his Majesty afterwards most graciously presented to the Emperor of China, and it is now one of

the most cherished ornaments of the imperial palace at Pekin. Favourite chair of the poet Bigg; the desk at which the poem of *The Course of Life* was written; the poet's table; the poet's pen-wiper; the poet's pen; a copy of the first edition of *The Course of Life*, bound in morocco—valuable from its possessing on the title page impromptu lines upon his work, addressed to my father and in her own handwriting by the poetess, Lady Grinderstone, authoress of *Strains of the Soul, or the Evangelical Hymnal*. From this window you can perceive the poet's favourite seat in the little arbour at the bottom of the garden; it is completely covered with nasturtiums in the summer time. The poet would often sit there for hours meditating upon his great poem, and generally upon philosophical and sacred topics. He would sometimes take his tea in that arbour" (more often, however, his hot rum - and - water, and clay pipe; only Miss Dorothea made no mention of those constant friends and companions of the poet, probably because they appeared to convey too material a notion of the poet's manner of life); "he would rather remain hours in that spot than enter the house, and be liable to the interruption of an

important train of thought. Specimen of my father's handwriting at the age of eighty-three, considered very remarkable for its distinctness, being written at so advanced an age ;" and so on. It will be seen that there was little danger of the fame of the late Bigg dying out in the seminary ; certainly, whatever else he was, he was a poet in his own household.

"The picture over the 'shiffoneer' is by the celebrated Cromer ; he was formerly professor of drawing and painting at this institution. It represents a fancy sketch of my late sister Adelaide" (at this moment Miss Dorothea was popularly supposed to remove a stray tear from the corner of her eye with the aid of a long bony finger, that looked rather like a stick of yellow sealing-wax). "It is considered a good likeness by many, though it always appeared to me that it did not do justice to the intellectual expression of my late sister, which was very remarkable. Upon her head she wears a turban of primrose-coloured satin. She is depicted in the character of St. Cecilia. It was a fancy of the artist's which my late sister did not approve, and which I am not prepared to defend. She is playing upon an organ of the form supposed

to be in use at that early period." (The musical instrument thus described, it is needless to say, was of the pattern, with which happily art has made us fully acquainted, and which appears to have resulted from an accidental combination, admirable for a still-life study,—of a patent mangle and a row of gas-pipes).

The drawing-room of Chapone House was rather grim and gaunt, hard and white. It was crowded with straight lines; it looked as though it had been starched and ironed. The visitor was always possessed with a doubt and a difficulty as to where he should sit; the forbidding aspect of the formal files of chairs lining the room at once compelled him to abandon all thought of finding relief in those quarters. He would no more have dreamt of removing one from its place against the wall than he would have contemplated pulling out one of Miss Bigg's front teeth. The furniture was all shrouded in white holland, just as though it was so much furniture that had departed this life, and had got its grave-clothes on all ready whenever the undertaker might come to announce that he was prepared to complete the business by decent interment. A chandelier in a white

bag, like an inverted and collapsed balloon, hung from the centre of the ceiling. The steel grates, glittering with polish, looked as though they knew nothing about fire, and wood, and coals, and such vulgarities: while they concealed their emptiness, like diners-out before dinner, behind superb shirt-fronts, thick with frilled decorations. For the poker, smooth, shining, slender—if it had been a gold stick in waiting it could not have enjoyed more of a sinecure.

Miss Dorothea Bigg was a very tall woman: she looked even taller than she really was, from her strenuous forbearance to diminish her appearance of height by amplitude of skirt. She resorted to no artificial means to project the folds of her dress, and, as a consequence, these hung limply in long lines; so that, in point of fact, the drapery screening her ankles was but little wider than where it covered her shoulders. Her figure was rectangular in pattern, her face very long and thin; the stiffly plaited cap exactly followed the outline of her head, and its sad-coloured ribbons were tied under her chin with a tightness that was most probably painful. Her eyebrows were strongly marked, her eyes a dull

black, her mouth large, showing when she spoke not merely many of her discoloured teeth, but a good margin of the gums in which these were set. The little black dab of a front that she wore upon her forehead might almost have been a petrification, it was so harsh and rigid. She had a general complaint that the weather was "very chilly" (certainly the climate in the Chapone House drawing-room was rather severe); and was for ever huddling a shabby cachmere shawl about her sharply-pointed shoulders, while she rubbed her hands one over the other briskly, until the grating of her mittens, as they came into contact with each other, became quite audible. She was not very erect, being almost too tall and slight for that; so that she advanced with rather a bending, sloping air, like the progress of a fire-escape or a camelopard.

The limited number of young ladies could perceive from the windows that a handsome barouche had stopped at the gate of Chapone House. The Mangnall's question-class were undergoing examination by Miss Mullins, who, being Irish by birth and accent, was engaged to teach English at the Misses Bigg's seminary.

"I think it's Leo Carr," whispered the young

lady nearest the window to her neighbour, and soon the information went round the class. Soon two pink-cheeked, blue-eyed, yellow-haired, thoroughly English-looking little girls began to blush with pleasure, and their little hearts to thump quite anxiously.

“It’s for *us*,” murmured the daughters of Francis Lomax, Esq., of the Wafer Stamp Office.

“Silence!” cried Miss Mullins. “I’ll have no looking out of the whindow during studhies. Miss Mhortimer. I’ll throuble you to name some of the eminent men who flourished in the reign of Heliogabalus. Oh, so you didn’t hear the question! Thin, perhaps, Miss Hengist will inform you.”

“Origen of Alexandria, one of the fathers of the Church, who repulsed the attacks of Celsus, the Epicurean philosopher,” Miss Hengist, with breathless eagerness, jerked out the reply.

“Quite right, Miss Hengist,” remarked Miss Mullins. “Miss Mhortimer will be so good as to write the lesson out six times. Miss Lomax—” Little Edith started like a pony making a first acquaintance with whipcord—“what kings in ancient history afford the most striking proof

of the vicissitudes to which human life is subject?"

Poor Edith's cheeks became yet more crimson, and her breathing very quick indeed. Like Miss Mortimer, she had permitted her attention to wander from Mangnall to the barouche at the gates. The hawk-eyes of Miss Mullins were detecting the deficiencies of the little lamb; a severe sentence was about to be pronounced, when the door of the school-room was flung wide open, and Miss Dorothea Bigg entered.

Leonora Carr was alone in the gaunt drawing-room. Mrs. Carr had accompanied her daughter to the school, but the old lady had declined the trouble of descending from the carriage to enter Chapone House, and attempt conversation with Miss Bigg.

"Don't ask me to get out, Leo dear," said Mrs. Carr, "for I can't do it. I don't like Miss Bigg. I never did like schoolmistresses, they're so formal, and so hungry-looking. Miss Bigg is a very estimable person, I daresay, and her school was very highly recommended to me, or I should not have entrusted you to her care; but it always seems to me that she wants to pick holes in everything I say, and it makes me

quite nervous: and it's so long since I went to school that I begin to think I'm talking bad grammar. Bring Edith and Rosy out and we'll take them for a drive—children like a drive—and we can go on to the pastry-cook's on Richmond Hill. Children are fond of the pastry-cooks. Take my card-case; you can leave my card and your papa's."

And Mrs. Carr leant back in the well-padded barouche, while Leonora tripped lightly up the vividly white steps of Chapone House. The old lady struggled at first with the drowsiness with which the gentle rocking of the well-built and balanced carriage always affected her. By-and-by she was nodding and dozing comfortably. (She took her three glasses of sherry at lunch regularly, in pursuance of the advice of her favourite physician, the famous Sir Cupper Leech.) Leonora had entered the drawing-room and confronted her former instructress, Miss Dorothea Bigg; who, on the sound of carriage wheels, had—according to her custom—made for that apartment, so that, on the entrance of visitors, she might be—to use a theatrical term—"discovered" seated on the hard sofa, at right angles with the icy-looking fireplace, studying the penultimate

canto of the poet Bigg's *Course of Life*. As "Miss Carr" was announced, she rose to greet her visitor, having first carefully marked the place at which her reading had been interrupted, by means of an elaborately embroidered card book-marker ; the words "Read, mark, and digest," appearing on it in coloured beads almost like an illumination legend, with long streamers of sea-green ribbon at either end.

Leonora, in spite of her slight form and not tall stature, was possessed of a good share of courage and strength of will. She was prepared for something of a conflict with her old schoolmistress, whom, I may as well say at once, she cordially hated ; in fact, as a rule, it is only those ultra and impossibly well-conducted children of the story-books (who, by the way, generally die young, I notice—and what a comfort that is !) who love their teachers. She had made up her mind as to the part she would play in the interview. She would be very cold, and stiff, and dignified. She had dressed for the part evidently, under the idea of impressing the schoolmistress: a superb brocaded silk, rustling noisily as she moved and struck the furniture with her ample skirts ; her tiny hands in the most delicately tinted gloves, holding her card-case, and

a handkerchief that was, in fact, a mere filmy square of lace.

“She’ll try to kiss me, I know her,” the little lady said to herself; “but I’ll take care that she doesn’t. I don’t know that I’ll even shake hands with her—I hate her.”

“My dear Leonora,” said Miss Dorothea, rising from the sofa with a great cordiality, and showing her teeth freely, which proceeding, indeed, constituted her notion of a smile, “how kee-ind this is. How glad I am to see you, my dear che-ild. Welcome again to our ’umble dwelling, to Chapone House.”

She extended her arms; she was evidently about to fall upon her late pupil and embrace her affectionately. (They bore about the relation to each other in size and form, that a lighthouse would bear to a diving-bell.) But the aspect of little Leo rather quenched this needless ardour. The expression of her face was very prim and demure indeed; her lips were drawn together into a compact little line; the brown eyes beamed very steadily and solemnly. She made a profound curtsy, the edges of her dress quite crackled upon the carpet as she descended among her flounces. She put forward two fingers of her left hand, as

she said, feebly, languidly, half closing her eyes, as though she were short-sighted and could so see better—

“Miss Bigg, I believe? I hope I see you well.”

The schoolmistress felt the effect of this demeanour.

“I hope your ma is well, Leonora. I hope your excellent pa enjoys his health,” she said, with rather a dashed manner.

Leonora listlessly produced two cards and pushed them gently across the table.

“Kind regards and inquiries,” she murmured affectedly. “I have come to see Edith and Rosa Lomax, by request of their mamma. Will you let them come to me?”

“They are now in class,” Miss Bigg adopting the formula usual on like occasion, and with a pretended hesitation. “As a rule we don’t like the studies of our young ladies to be interrupted.”

“That is of no consequence,” Leo said grandly. “Of course I must see them. I have come here with that object only.”

“Little minx,” muttered Miss Dorothea, as she left the drawing-room in quest of the young ladies inquired for. “I should like to give her a good shaking, I should.”

Leo's face changed as her enemy departed. She wore quite an expression of triumph.

"Oh, if she only knew how frightened I really am of her," she exclaimed, and by way of relief to her feelings she made a disrespectful *moue* at Cadmium's portrait of the author of *The Course of Life* over the mantelpiece, and another at Cromer's sketch above the "shiffoneer" of Miss Adelaide Bigg in the character of St. Cecilia. Leonora had known Adelaide in the flesh (she had not had much to speak of), and had not loved her greatly.

"How I hate this room; it gives me quite a creepy, crawly sensation," soliloquized Leonora. "How well I remember that great, ugly, upright, piano in the corner, with its frayed, faded yellow silk. And all those dreadful pictures. Bigg was a hideous-looking man, although he was a poet—at least, they say here that he was. Ah! and that precious china card-basket, riveted in three places; and those old-fashioned bronze and brass and glass lustres, and that looking-glass, which makes one look quite green. What yards and yards of brown holland; wax flowers in the middle of the table; stuffed birds between the windows; Bigg's poem, first edition, in

morocco, and his chair, and desk, and penwiper, the old fright; and Miss Adelaide's album, with original lines never published, by Hannah More, or Mrs. Hemans, or Mrs. Barbauld, or some one, I'm sure I forget. I never could make out what they meant, I know *that*. And old Dorothea's Church Service in dirty red velvet with brass edges. How I hate the whole place! Ah! here she comes again." And Leonora hurriedly resumed a studied position of much grace, but considerable affectation.

Edith and Rosa Lomax entered the room. There had just been time to perform a hurried toilette as to their countenances: these had been rubbed with a moist towel by an expeditious servant, who had also, being a clever and handy woman, found time to apply a brush vigorously to their yellow hair; the process being almost as brief and rapid as when a brisk baker rasps a burnt French roll. After Leonora had kissed the fresh, cool cheeks of her young friends she detected a distinct flavour of soap lingering upon her lips.

"How do you do, dear?" she inquired, still preserving her fine-lady manner, for Miss Dorothea was still present.

"I'm before Edith in French," says little Rosy with a triumphant sparkle in her blue eyes.

"Are you, dear? I'm sure you ought to be very grateful to those who take so much pains to instruct you."

Leonora's languid eyes rest for a moment on the schoolmistress, who, not entirely free from suspicion, bows a grim acknowledgment of the compliment conveyed by the remark.

"I hope your pupils give you satisfaction, Miss Bigg," and Leonora bows her head with wonderful courtesy.

"I have no grave cause of complaint against them," Miss Bigg replies, slowly sighing.

Soon a reluctant permission is obtained for the little girls having a drive in Mrs. Carr's barouche.

"It's unusual," the schoolmistress remarks, "very unusual; yes, and inconvenient; and against the rules. It is only the relatives of the young ladies who are permitted to remove them from my care for ever so short a time."

She watched the effect of these observations upon Leonora. They had no success in the way of quelling that young lady. She adhered to her demand; the children by their anxious

glances and gleaming eyes endorsing her views of the case as earnestly as they dared.

"I suppose I must consent," Miss Bigg said. "I suppose I must make an exception in *your* case, Leonora, my former esteemed pupil. Though it's to be much regretted that they should be deprived of the benefit of Miss Mullins' admirable instruction in English; she is now occupied with her class."

"Somehow," little Rosy said to her sister, as they put on their bonnets, "I don't think I like Leo so much as I used to do; do you, Edith? She's rather fine and grand, and stuck up; don't you think so?"

"What nice gloves she has on, and what a darling parasol," Edith remarks. (She is already acquiring a taste in dress.)

"I suppose they'll drive to Richmond. I hope they'll take us to the pastry-cook's," and Rosy claps her little red hands, moved to that demonstration by visions of tarts.

"For shame, Rosy, thinking of such things. How *can* you be so greedy?"

"Oh, yes, miss; but you'll eat quite as many things as I shall, if you get the chance. If Mrs. Carr asks me if I'll have some ginger-beer I shall

say, yes. I like to see it fizz up. It's so nice, only it always brings the tears into my eyes. Don't you love ginger-beer, Edith? I do."

Meanwhile Miss Carr has visited the school-room, interrupting, by permission of Miss Bigg, hesitatingly accorded, Miss Mullins' Mangnall's Questions class. She has resumed her acquaintance with certain of her old fellow pupils and playmates; she is very kind, and smiling, and gracious; a little too condescending, they agreed afterwards; but she is rather full of her grand manner in the neighbourhood of Miss Bigg. The young ladies crowd round her, admiring her greatly. Miss Mortimer thinks "her bonnet lovely, and in charming taste." Miss Hengist holds that her brocaded silk is sweetly pretty, and most fashionably made. It is true that *that* Miss Bobbin ventures to sneer at the visitor after her withdrawal, denouncing her even as a "judy," and a "guy" (whatever those terms may signify: they were regarded by her associates as bitterly and needlessly hostile). But then Miss Bobbin had never been admitted to the friendship of Leonora. Miss Bobbin was notoriously a rude girl: rude in her speech, and opinions, and actions. She had been known to call Miss Mullins names

even to her face, while she had on one occasion actually slapped the French teacher. There had even been a talk at one time of expelling her the school: so the girls whispered to each other. No one could be surprised at anything Miss Bobbin might say. No one could care either. What could you expect? Was not her father the large millowner, the member for that dreadful place Shuttlecombe, in the north of England—a fiery Radical and democrat; a dangerous man, as many country gentlemen had freely stated. Lord Stonehenge had at one time meditated removing his daughter from contact with the man Bobbin's daughter. But somehow that nobleman's intentions were constantly a very long way ahead of his conduct.

“Take care of your fingers, dears, as he shuts the door. Mind their frocks, Andrews. Richmond, and, Andrews, stop at the pastry-cook's.” So Mrs. Carr gives instructions. “Well, my dears, you look very well. Your mamma will be glad to hear that. I shall see her next week. I suppose you're already looking forward to the Michaelmas holidays. Talk to them, Leo—amuse them—there's a dear.”

Leo's manner had undergone a complete change.

Even critical Rosy was satisfied upon that subject now.

“You darlings,” she cried presently, quite boisterously, “how glad I am to see you! Come and kiss me again both of you. I was obliged to be grand and stately before that horrid old thing, Bigg. Isn’t she an old dragon, Rosy?”

“She is,” Rosy says at once, with frank acquiescence.

“Now we can have some fun!”

And there is great prattling and laughing, and something between a squeak and a crow from Rosy; very noisy indeed, waking up echoes amongst the stately elms of Kew Gardens—amazing Mrs. Carr.

“Oh, Leo! You do tickle me so dreadfully!”

“Ah! this is all very well,” Leo remarks with mock sedateness. “You’ll have to behave very differently, by-and-by. You’ll have both of you to treat me with great ceremony and respect. A whisper to both of you. Perhaps I’m going to become aunt Leo. Think of that!”

“You’re not; what stuff!” Rosy exclaims, incredulous.

“Suppose that I and uncle Arnold ——”

“Are you going to marry uncle Ar, Leo?”

Edith asks—she is a little girl of quick perception.

“Perhaps, Edie.”

“Marry uncle Ar ; oh, what fun !” and Rosy claps her hands again, partly, perhaps, because the carriage stopped just then at the foot of Richmond Hill, at a well-known shop.

What a feast they had at that pastry-cook’s ! What a number of maids-of-honour they consumed (how cannibally it sounds !); and Rosy had ginger-beer, and tears in her eyes, and the froth and bubbles of the draught all over her lips, and nose, and cheeks. She enjoyed herself immensely, and did not feel in the least ill after her exertions. She was blessed with the digestive powers of a young ostrich.

“And now tell me, dears, something about the school. When did my pet little Baby Gill go away ? I did not see her in the class-room, and I forgot to make inquiry about her.”

Four blue eyes opened very widely at this question.

“She hasn’t gone away at all.”

“Where is she then ?”

“She’s very bad. Haven’t you heard, Leo ?”

“Naughty ? no, she was never naughty.”

"No, she's ill. We haven't seen her for days. No one has seen her. She's up at quite the top of the house. No one has seen her. We don't know what's the matter with her."

"How cruel of me to be laughing and talking here, and never thinking of the poor little soul before. I'll see her when I go back though," Leo says, self-reproachfully.

"I don't think Miss Bigg will let you see her."

"Hum! I'm of a different opinion, Miss Edie."

"Miss Bigg," said Leonora, "before I return to town, I am most anxious to renew my acquaintance with my little friend, Barbara Gill. I am sorry to learn that she is unwell—confined to her room, indeed."

"I regret, Miss Carr, to inform you that it is quite impossible to comply with your request."

"Miss Bigg, I should wish you to understand," said Leo, firmly, "that I don't leave the house until I have seen Barbara Gill."

Miss Bigg turned quite pale. It was hard to say whether with anger or from alarm. Her hand shook so that she removed it from the table.

“Miss Carr, it is impossible,” she muttered.

“Miss Bigg, I don't think so.” And Leo turned the light of her brilliant eyes full on the white face of the schoolmistress.

CHAPTER IV.

APARTMENTS FURNISHED.

NINE o'clock and past. A thickening mist: lost in it, London looks like a huge fresco, over which some barbarous hand has spread a first coat of whitewash; or a giant corpse, strange and blurred, and awful in its outlines, swathed in grave-clothes of gauze. All colour has gone, with all distinctness and delicacy of drawing. Nothing now save confused masses of shadow, more or less opaque; and here and there suggestions of shape that speedily dwindle into vagueness: the lamps in the roadways seem to be mere sparks glimmering behind thick horn or ground glass, they emit so dim and feeble a light. The mist everywhere; now setting in a dense inanimate cloud; now shifting capriciously in wreathed streaky vapour. Not the saffron-hued fog of evenings later in the year: not the fine old tawny November, with plenty of body in it and crust about it. The light

India muslin mist floating round the traveller, rather than the yellow India shawl fog that wraps so suffocatingly tight, with a consistency so dense and oppressive.

A woman hurrying, running, arrives breathless at the toll-gate on the Surrey side of Hungerford Suspension Bridge. With trembling eagerness she thrusts a piece of money into the gate-keeper's hand, and then pushes at the turnstile.

"Stop a minute."

"For God's sake let me through," she cries passionately.

The man is not greatly moved; he examines the coin she has given him, bites it, examines it anew.

"I can't take this."

"Is it bad?" and she takes out her purse with quick nervous fingers.

"Not as I knows on; but I can't take it. It's furrin money."

She gives him an English shilling.

"Here, stop! Your change!"

But she has hurried through, and is now some yards on her way, running as fast as she can. She heeds not even if she hears him. Soon she is lost in the mist.

“Rum uns, women are,” the gate-keeper remarks. “I never could make out whether they like saving or spending money most. Sometimes they’ll stand higgie-haggle for hours all about twopence half-penny, the next moment they’ll fling all they’ve got in the world out o’ window. Rum uns I call them.”

He nodded and winked, and shook his head, entirely, it would seem, for his own gratification; for he was quite alone, and even his blackbird in a wicker cage in a corner of the room was fast asleep; and spun the shilling in the air, and commenced to conjure with it—swallowing it and bringing it by turns out of his eyes and his ears and his nose, a neat performance; it was a pity there were no spectators to enjoy it and applaud.

“Hi, hillo! O! oho!”

How thick it is on the Surrey side of the river. A cabman has mistaken his way, and believes himself at Waterloo Bridge when he is only at Hungerford. He is now backing on the pavement, coming with a thump on the kerb-stone, or trying to turn round a lamp-post in a peculiarly purposeless manner.

“Cabby’s lost his ’ead; or the fog’s been and

got in it and fuddled him." So the gate-keeper comments.

The woman runs on, very quickly and lightly ; yet, evidently, she is distressed. She is painfully breathless. She holds one hand to her side and presses it tightly there : she suffers from what the Faculty would call "lancinating pains in the side;" what the people describe briefly as "the stitch." She stops for a moment to lean against the chain of the bridge and recover herself. She is quite hot with running, and she dabs her forehead with her handkerchief, and loosens the strings of her bonnet and the wrappings round her throat.

"This is better than the darkest night," she murmurs, glancing round approvingly. "How my heart beats. I feel quite sick with running. I must rest for a minute, only for a minute. Surely there will be no danger in that." And she appears to discuss with herself the propriety of pausing.

A fragile-looking woman, with a pallid face and large, limpid, intent eyes—one can see so much, the mist notwithstanding—her dress of a neutral tint that readily blends with the prevailing obscurity. Flying along as she had been,

she looked like a creature of air, an incarnation of the mist: her face discernible long before the lines of her figure and the shape of her flowing skirts were to be traced with any degree of distinctness.

“Directly, directly; I will start again directly.”

She is occupied with self-communing.

The mist becomes very dense. The bridge seems as though it were hung in the clouds: the water below, the land at either end, are alike screened from sight. The few passengers grow bewildered. Some shout as they advance, to warn those coming in an opposite direction. A footstep is heard close to where the woman is resting: another second, and a hand as though groping its way along, touches her shoulder.

“What’s this?” asks some one, puzzled.

How the woman starts, as though she had been stabbed with sharp steel or seared with hot iron.

“Let me go! don’t touch me!”

And she is off running again at her utmost speed.

“Well, I never,” says the voice, gruffly, and as though indignant at such unnecessary vehemence; “who wants to touch you? Women should never come out in fogs, they always get frightened.

People should never lose their presence of mind. God bless me! how thick the mist is over the river. I wish I was well home. But I daresay it will be better on the Middlesex side."

It *was* better on the Middlesex side; the woman found it so. It would vary a good deal—now coming densely over, now lifting off, as it were, and growing thinner and lighter; remaining so for a few minutes, then darkening again, like a coquette at a masquerade toying with her mask, now showing, now hiding her face.

On flew our fugitive, fog or no fog. She was soon in the Strand. She stood for a moment as though in doubt whether to proceed eastward or westward. Then she turned to the east, running again. The mist was decidedly clearer now, and many people looked back wonderingly after she had passed them. Some even, with that broad, wilful jocoseness common in the London streets, seeing her advance rapidly, set up a cry to startle her, or stretched out a hand, as though to detain her. This frightened her terribly. She sprang aside or dashed across the road, and then, as though convinced that there was greater safety in the quieter thoroughfares, she turned abruptly out of the Strand and soon found herself in a tangle of

streets in the neighbourhood of Clare Market. She went on, however, at random apparently, and at last emerged in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The mist seemed here, as it always does seem in open places, to be denser again, as bad even as it had been on the bridge. Again she stopped.

"Where am I? where shall I go? what place is this? Oh, if I had but *one* friend in London!"

The words were uttered breathlessly; yet in tones very soft and plaintive.

"Have you lost your way?"

She started back, a policeman stood at her elbow.

"Holborn," she gasped out; "where is it? is it near?"

She was trembling with fright.

"Cross the square, go through that farther corner, and you're in it."

Again she was hurrying on. But she soon quitted Holborn for the same reason, as it seemed, that she had turned from the Strand. The noise and stir, the number of passengers and vehicles alarmed her. She was in Gray's Inn Lane; but she left it abruptly by a street on the right hand. A little way on, and she was leaning against the dense walls of the House of Correction, Cold Bath

Fields. She was on higher ground now, the fog was comparatively slight and transparent. But she could run no more. She tottered as she walked—she was so fatigued and exhausted—almost fainting. A few more paces, and she stopped to read the name of a street inscribed on a corner house, well lit up by a lamp-post close at hand, and the glare of a public-house on the opposite side of the way, the proprietor of which was evidently bent upon brilliance, at no matter what expenditure in gas.

“COPPICE ROW,” she made out with some little difficulty. “I wonder where that is? in what part of London? I must have come some miles.” Her voice was broken, and she was now pressing both hands to her side. “I can go no farther. Oh, that I could sit down and rest.”

The corner house was a newsvender’s—the shop window crowded with publications of various kinds; newspapers suspended by strings covering even the door-posts, so that they looked something like the masts of a ship in full sail. All sorts of particoloured placards spotted the outside of the house and drew attention to the merits of *this* wonderfully cheap newspaper, or *that* intensely interesting miscellany. And the proprietor of the

shop dealt also in tobacco, snuff, cigars, and pipes. Mechanically, the woman's eyes wandered over the shop window; suddenly they rested upon a piece of paper wafered against the glass; it announced in feeble characters and faint ink that furnished apartments were to be let, and that inquiry was to be made within.

"Why not here as well as anywhere else?" she asked herself. "It cannot be dear here;" and she passed in at the door of the shop.

A fat man, in a Scotch bonnet, behind the counter, was ladling snuff out of an earthen jar by means of an instrument in form something between a spoon and a shoe-horn twisted the wrong way. The customer was a child waiting in the shop, pressing its nose against the edge of the counter, and clutching tightly a few warm half-pence in its tiny, not clean, red hands.

"A quarter of a hounce of blackguard for father—there you 'ave it," said the man, wrapping up the snuff in a scrap of paper adorned with a rude representation of a Scotchman performing a national dance over a vapid conundrum. "Anything helse? What's for mother?"

"No 103 of the Felon's Aunt, and this week's number of the Chronicle of Crime," the child

cried out in a shrill treble; the sentence pointed rather by breathlessness and anxiety, than any strict system of punctuation.

“Very good;” and the man, from a confused huddle of periodical publications, looked out those required.

The transaction completed, and the hot halfpence thrust into the till, the child looked up with wide-open inquiring eyes,—it had probably never been taught that it was rude to stare—an early lesson in well-regulated nurseries—at the pale woman who now entered the shop.

“You let apartments, I believe?” she asked, in a low voice.

“Private door, please,” answered the man in the Scotch bonnet. “This is the shop entrance; don’t ask here, but at the private door.”

He spoke pompously, but not unkindly. A fat bland man, with a weak streak of hair upon his upper lip; a meaningless face, dull grey eyes, and a husky voice.

The woman seemed a little alarmed at this rebuff. She left the shop, however, and slowly approached a private door at the side. She raised her hand to the knocker, apparently un-

aware that another person was standing close to her on the step.

"I *have* knocked," a voice said calmly. She was so startled that she gave quite a scream of alarm.

"Pray forgive me. I'm afraid I have frightened you."

The words were spoken in tones so kind and sympathetic as to dispel at once all fear or suspicion. Still her heart was beating with painful violence.

She then perceived, close in the angle of the doorway, a small figure, a boy crouching, as she was at first inclined to believe. Upon a closer examination, however, she discovered that a man was leaning against the door-post in a position almost as upright as he could assume, for indeed he was deformed; a very short man, his head sunk deep between his shoulders; one foot twisted and clubbed. He must have been less than five feet in height altogether.

"Pray pardon me," he went on in rather a troubled voice. "I ought to have been more careful. You have been out in the fog, perhaps, and that has made you timid, and inclined to start at trifles. I know what it is to do that.

I am dreadfully nervous myself at times ; at least I *was* I should say. I am better and stronger now. (How long they are at the door !) But now you are quite safe you know, and the fog is clearing off. You will soon be quite well again, when you have rested."

The deformed's manner was so gentle, and his tone of voice so tender, that the woman seemed quite moved. She turned, in order to see him better. She found that he had small delicate features, not regular, yet prepossessing ; long fair hair that fell on his shoulders, but then they were very high and rounded ; a pale complexion and earnest-looking eyes. Some feeling of sympathy seemed to be established at once between the man and the woman. But she was at a loss, apparently, how to address him. She spoke at last with effort, and as though at a loss for words.

"Help me," she said to him simply—faintly.

Her hands clasped together as she made this appeal.

"Indeed I will, if I can. Show me how to help you."

"I am most wretched—most miserable !" and she covered her face sobbing.

"Don't cry, don't cry !" The deformed took

her hand. He started. "How hot your hand is. It quite burns. You are ill. You are suffering from fever."

Her face was deathly pale.

"Hush!" she said, in a low voice. "Help me. They let lodgings here; I must take them. I grow quite giddy. I must go in and lie down."

"I'll knock again;" and he plied the knocker boldly. "Why do they keep us so long? You should not be standing here."

The door was opened almost immediately by the newsvender in the Scotch bonnet.

"Now what is it?" he asked, peevishly, "what is it? I have nothink to do with this department. I have nothink to do with the 'ouse or the lodgings, nothink whatever. They're entirely under Mrs. S.'s control, and I never interfere, never. My sphere" (he said *sphere*) "is the shop, and, if you please, I'll stick to it."

The words came from him flaccidly. Perhaps the fact of his tongue being too large for his mouth, aggravated his slipshod manner of speech. But he seemed proud of his elocution, nevertheless, and gazed, while he spoke, above the heads of those whom he addressed. Suddenly he recognized the deformed.}]

“Ah! Mr. Hooper” (of course he omitted the H.), “how de do. I beg your pardin, I’m sure. I didn’t see it was you. Mr. Gossett *is* in. You see it ain’t my place to attend to the door, only Mrs. S. haven’t come in yet; and as for that girl Nancy, one might as well keep no servant at all, as I’m always a-telling Mrs. S.: ’alf-an-hour fetching the supper beer, or filling a scuttle of coal, or what not. Oh! here comes Mr. Gossett.”

The newsvender withdrew; of the woman standing at the side of Mr. Hooper, he took no notice.

“Robin, old man, how are you?” cried a deep, strong, hearty voice. “Why, I thought you were lost in the mist. Come in. I’m in splendid voice. I’ve touched G below the line.” And he commenced to sing—

L’or est une chimère,
Sachons-nous en servir
Le vrai bien sur la terre
N’est-il pas le plaisir?

Rum-ti-iddity. Rum-ti-iddity, &c. &c.

“That’s getting near Levasseur, I think? But what’s the matter?”

A short, broad gentleman, with a rather bald head, a long moustache, and a pipe in his mouth, appeared at the door. He had been talking as

he descended the staircase, and was unaware of what had been happening on the step.

“Why, what’s the matter, Robin? You’re as white as a sheet.”

“Look here, Phil. Help me, for Heaven’s sake! Here’s a woman fainting, I think; help her in; carry her; we can never leave her like this. Help her, Phil, for God’s sake!”

Thus appealed to, Mr. Gossett, as the news-vender had called him, without a word, threw away his pipe, took up the woman, and carried her upstairs into the room over the shop. It was a comfortable-looking room, in spite of the rather shabby, over-worn furniture. Mr. Gossett, who had carried her as though she had weighed but a few ounces, gently laid the poor woman on the sofa.

“Thank you,” she murmured, drowsily, raising herself. “I shall be better soon.” But she closed her eyes, and fell back.

“How did this happen, Rob? How pale she is.”

“She came to the door just as I was knocking. I know no more. She seemed very faint and exhausted then, and was panting for breath, and trembling. I’m afraid I frightened

her rather," he added sadly. "I'm so little, and in the darkness of the doorway she overlooked me, and afterwards gave quite a scream and shook all over. There's no danger, Phil, is there? Tell me, you don't think there's any danger? Say so, Phil."

"I don't know what to think, to tell you the truth."

"Oh, Phil, but you *should* know. You're a doctor—your a medical student. Is there any danger?"

Mr. Gossett looked rather bewildered. He tugged at his black moustache.

"I'm *only* a student, Rob, remember. Don't expect too much." There was a half comical glance in his eyes as he said this. Then he turned again, with all seriousness, to the sufferer.

"If she should be dead!" cried Robin, in a tone of agony.

"Don't be frightened, Rob; she's not dead; her pulse still beats—though—though,"—and the face of the medical student grew grave—"indeed it's hardly perceptible. Get some cold water, Rob; quick as you can, old boy. You'll find some in my bedroom, close by;" and he unfastened the top of her dress. Loosening her

collar, he smoothed the hair from her face, fanning her with his handkerchief.

"How white she is," said Robin Hooper. "She's like marble; and how beautiful, isn't she? Oh, Phil! don't let her die."

"Hush! She is better, I think; the cold water has roused her."

Slowly the woman opened her eyes; her lips parted; the colour had quite gone from them; gradually she seemed to become conscious of her situation. Her eyes rested upon Robin Hooper, the deformed man. She made an effort to speak.

"Save me," she moaned, very feebly, and stretched forth a small, thin, white hand. He pressed it reverently—tenderly.

"There's a knock at the door," said the student. "It must be Mrs. Simmons. Run, Rob, and beg her to come here."

He spoke with seriousness, if not alarm. Robin hurried from the room. He moved rapidly, though his foot compelled him to limp very much. He was heard talking eagerly on the staircase.

"You must, Mrs. Simmons, indeed you must; do, there's a dear soul."

A tall, stout woman, rather red-faced, entered

the room. She spoke loudly, and her manner was a little abrupt.

“Oh, Mr. Hooper,” she said, “when once you get an idea into your head there’s certainly no getting it out again. What am I to do? Haven’t I troubles enough? I’m sure one would think so. What with this house over my head, and a pack of noisy lodgers, like that Mr. Gossett there, and only me to do for them all, and a slut of a girl to look after—that isn’t worth her salt, let alone her tea and sugar—and a good-for-nothing husband that’s all plague and no profit, and a lot of children quarrelling and bothering after me from morning till night,—haven’t I enough to do, but what you must bring home a sick woman here—a woman, by all that’s respectable—and turn the place into a hospital and me into a nurse? Anything else? What next? Well, where’s the patient?”

She had advanced by this time to the sofa, upon which the woman was lying in a deplorable state. Her tone and manner changed at once, and she went down on her knees, taking the woman’s hand and chafing it.

“Poor soul, how ill she looks; very ill indeed, poor woman. Poor girl, rather. Why, she’s a mere

child. How slight, how pretty, too. But we must rouse her from this faint, Mr. Gossett, or——”

Robin could not repress a cry of alarm.

“Bless the man, what’s the good of making that noise?” Mrs. Simmons said, sternly. “What use do you expect that will be? You’d better by half run and fetch a doctor. It’s always safest to have one in. There’s no knowing what may happen.”

“I’ll go round to St. Lazarus—it’s only a step from here,” said Mr. Gossett, starting up.

“As quick as you like; the poor child’s very white, very weak.”

“I’ll go, I’ll go,” cried Robin. “Pray let me go. I can run very fast, very fast indeed, I can; as fast as anybody.”

“I think not,” said Gossett, kindly. “I think you had better let me go. Trust me, Rob, I’ll go full speed.”

Robin glanced sadly at his mis-shapen foot, and sighed.

“Perhaps you *can* go quicker than I can. Only make haste, there’s a good old Phil!”

Mr. Gossett was off without another word.

“Oh, Mrs. Simmons, do you think she’s really very bad?”

“Look at that face. Did you ever see anything more like a corpse?”

Robin turned away as he said in a broken voice—

“Half an hour ago she was nothing to me. I am a poor over-sensitive deformed fool, very likely; but, if she were to die, I should never be happy again.”

He spoke with some passion, trembling, and his eyes shining very brightly, as he tossed his long fair hair from his forehead.

“You’ve a kind heart, Mr. Robin,” said Mrs. Simmons, gently; “a very kind heart;” and she shook his hand.

“Do all you can for her.”

“Indeed I will. If for no other reason, why then for your sake, Mr. Robin. But the poor thing looks very bad.”

Some time passed before the doctor arrived. All the ordinary efforts to rouse the sufferer were without effect.

“Now, then, what’s all this about?” asked Dr. Hawkshaw, from St. Lazarus Hospital, entering with Mr. Gossett. “What have you brought me from the hospital for? It was a mere chance I was there—an interesting case in the accident

ward." He seized the woman's wrist, a little roughly, so Robin thought; but probably the doctor knew what he was about.

"Did she look like this when you first met her?" he inquired of Robin Hooper, as he placed his hand upon her heart.

"Yes, very much like that," answered Robin. "Indeed I remember thinking at the time that she looked like——"

"Like what?" asked the doctor, sharply.

"Like a woman who had seen a ghost."

"Pooh! Stuff! What's a ghost?—a symptom of disease, not a disease itself. It proceeds from the stomach. Ghosts always proceed from the stomach; they signify bile, disordered brain, inactive liver; the system in a devil of a state, and so on. Never lose your head, Mr. Gossett. It's an important thing to recollect in our profession. But the fact is, men have a great tendency towards losing their heads: especially young men. Throw that window open. The girl's in a weak state of health; her nerves have been acted upon violently; she's been over-exerting herself—frightening herself. More cold water, Mrs. Simmons; don't be afraid of it. There, she's better already. She breathes. A little sal volatile

as soon as she can swallow, and we'll soon put her on her legs again," &c. &c.

It was some short time after this that Mrs. Simmons descended to the very small parlour at the back of the news-shop, now closed for the night.

"What *is* the matter, Mrs. S.?" asked the fat man, in his husky peevish voice. "What *'as* been going on upstairs?"

"Don't bother," said his wife, sharply. "Have you eaten all the supper, or have you left me anything? I've had nothing since my tea at five o'clock, and I'm quite famished. Why don't you answer, Simmons?"

"Lor', Eliza, don't snap at one like that. There's a sassage on the 'ob. I left it a purpose for you. I've 'ad my supper 'ours ago. I really couldn't wait. That shop do fatigue a feller so. Dear me, I'm afraid that sassage is quite cold. You see I didn't think to keep the fire in, because I was just agoing to bed when you come down."

"You're a selfish pig, Simmons," said his wife, so calmly, and with so complete an air of conviction, that the reproach seemed to be almost deprived of offence. "Give me a pickle, and

pour me out a glass of beer. I shall be better presently."

Mr. Simmons did not hurry himself, but eventually attended to his wife's requirements. Suddenly she put down her knife and fork, and looked sternly at her lord.

"There's a smell of spirits here. Simmons, you've been drinking."

He turned very red in the face. He removed his Scotch bonnet, to rub his shining bald head with a large many-coloured handkerchief. Perhaps the bonnet was worn so constantly to conceal his loss of hair.

"Now, Eliza, there's no call to rail at me," he said, deprecatingly; "supposing it being a misty, depressing evening, and me knocked up with working 'ard all day in the shop, and having a symptom of a coff upon me, which you know, Eliza, I'm delicate on my chess, and 'ow my ashmer troubles me at times; and supposing I sit down to a bit of supper quite alone, and you, Eliza, absent—and which you know I never like to have my supper by myself—and supposing I do mix myself just a small glass of 'ollands, or what not, before I go to bed, surely, Eliza——"

"There, there, that will do," said Mrs. Sim-

mons, abruptly. But the stream of her husband's oratory was not to be stayed so easily.

"And which, of course, Eliza," he went on, "if I'd thought you would have objected, or would have liked me to have kept supper waiting for you, or the kettle biling, or the fire in, or the sassages 'ot, or have mixed a glass of 'ollands for you, with pleasure I'd have done it; or——"

"There, Simmons, do stop and let me eat my supper; when once you get the talks on there's no bearing you. It's the Hollands gets into your head, and makes more a fool of you than ever."

Mr. Simmons, with a rather fatuous expression of face, twirled the ends of his feeble moustache. He gazed with a half-frightened, half-admiring air at his wife, as she made steady progress with her supper.

"But what 'as been going on upstairs?" he soon recommenced; "are any of the children ill?"

"No, thank Heaven! or I don't know what we should do."

"What *is* the matter, then? Have Mr. Gossett got a party?"

"No, he hasn't. But there's a poor girl upstairs been very faint and ill. I'm sure at one time

I didn't think she'd live from one minute to another."

"In *my* house!" and Mr. Simmons started up. "I won't have it. Suppose she were to die?—only think!"

"You be quiet; sit down!" she said angrily. "What made it your house? what have you got to do with the lodgers? If I choose, I'll have a score of people come and be sick and ill and die here; and I'll have a coroner's inquest in every room in the house—attics included. Lor' bless me! haven't I enough to do without your chattering and worrying? I've to play in a new part of I don't know how many lengths, at the Paroquet, on Monday; and I haven't looked at a line of it yet. I've all the children's socks to mend; I've the lodgers to attend to; and this poor girl half dead in Phil Gossett's room. Little enough sleep shall I get to-night, I know that."

She had turned away for a minute; when she looked at her husband again he had dozed off quietly in his chair—very fat and placid, and not wise-looking. Whereas his own talk had a certain enlivening effect upon him, the observations of others were often attended with a directly contrary result.

“The fool I was to marry Simmons!” she exclaimed, quietly. “I thought him a handsome man and a love of a figure, I remember, years ago, when he was playing Harlequin at Bath. Clever he never was; but who would ever have expected then he would have grown so fat and so ugly, and so selfish. Ugh! But here’s the doctor again. Let’s hear how the patient goes on.”

CHAPTER V.

HARLEQUIN AND COLUMBINE.

LOVELY woman *will* stoop to folly; to do so is part of her graceful, tender, pliant nature—she can't help it. Ever since the world began—and so on, I suppose, until it ends—Eve and her daughters have been and will be prone to commit numberless silly, charming, absurd, fond, admirable actions. Like those fashionable West-End mercers, who seem to be unable to carry on their business without periodically snapping the bonds of rational trade; inoculating their shops with a bedlamite virus, and breaking out into a delirious “SALE WITHOUT RESERVE!” “AN ALARMING SACRIFICE!” or a “SELLING OFF UNDER COST PRICE, WITH NO REASONABLE OFFER REFUSED!”—who, with the poetical untidiness of mad Ophelia sticking sordid straws and hedge-flowers amid her beautiful tresses, glory every now and then in soiling their superb plate-glass with shabby bills and

placards, littering their floors and counters with valuable merchandise, hanging silk dresses from second-story windows, and crinolines from chimney-pots,—just so, lovely woman is afflicted with a recurrent passionate desire to break the even pathway of her life by landmarks of events—to star her career with crises—to sell off occasionally, so to speak, at an alarming sacrifice, and without any sort of reserve, and to let herself go to anyone that will bid, refusing no kind of offer, reasonable or unreasonable—perhaps the more unreasonable the better.

If to enforce some such teaching as this, an example were required, it might be found in the story of Miss Montresor, of the T. R., Bath, who, some years ago now, ran away with handsome Jemmy Simmons, the harlequin. It was in days when a flavour of the old Ellistonian glory still lingered about the T. R., Bath. The city of King Bladud and Beau Nash—like a faded coquette who yet promises herself one or two more seasons of low dresses, galops, and ball-room champagne, before she is resigned to a poke bonnet and the rôle of a sister of charity—was still playing *écarté* while drifting to evangelicalism. A remnant of the old guard remained,

keeping up, as it were, a running fight with time ; their numbers were frightfully diminished, but they closed their ranks ; they kept shoulder to shoulder, they presented a bold front—many beld fronts, I may say. A limited phalanx of bewigged old ladies, radiant with diamonds, burning with rouge, furiously fragrant with musk and bergamot, in glossy satins and beautiful blonde—their threadbare necks richly jewelled, and their rather palsied hands glittering with rings and bracelets—often filled certain boxes of the theatre, and bestowed a persistent patronage upon the manager—for one reason, that the theatre offered a good, open, public mode of defying the opposition, of running counter to, and manifesting contempt for, the opinions of prudery and puritanism. And to match the old ladies, there were plenty of old gentlemen—nicely-padded and buckled, curled, dyed, toupéed, well-repaired, and made up altogether—headed by the old Marquis of Southernwood, who had engaged a box for the whole season, and lolled in it night after night, leering at the actresses and ogling the ladies of the audience—a juvenile, flaxen-headed gentleman of seventy-eight, with bloodshot eyes and artificial teeth, debonair manners, and most free conversation. Under these auspices a certain air

of fashion still remained to the T. R., Bath, and the manager put money in his purse, and secured all available metropolitan and provincial talent, and included many attractive-looking young ladies in his troupe; and amongst others, Arabella Montresor—her real name was Eliza Perkins, and she was said to be the daughter of old Tom Perkins, well known as the proprietor of Perkins's Dairy, Kentish Town. (I know that once, during a squabble in the ladies'-room of the theatre, Miss Montresor fairly burst into tears when that giddy Miss Vivian—Polly Vivian she was often known as—screamed out with markedly offensive shrillness, "Milk below, O!" and appeared to insinuate that Miss Montresor, at an early period of her life, had even carried out the cans.) And in addition to Miss Montresor and Miss Vivian, there was also the fascinating singing chambermaid, Louisa Delafosse.

The career of Lord Southernwood is, I am thankful to say, so well known that I am spared the necessity of setting it forth here with any particularity. In nursery books and infant stories, as we are all aware, a wicked ogre every now and then makes his appearance, to the agony of childhood. So in turning over that grown-up, drawing-room collection of fairy tales, the *Peerage*,

we come here and there upon Bogey noblemen—(at least, we used to ; the Bogey nobleman is becoming extinct almost, or is seldom to be lighted on now out of fashionable works of fiction). George Henry Ernest Gaston, fifth Marquis of Southernwood, had become a little too notorious. He was a Bogey nobleman if there ever was one. He was rusticated for a time. He retreated from London to Bath ; the air of which city has been often found beneficial to invalid reputations—balmy to battered characters. The marquis was not unkindly received. The Dowager Lady Rougeminster, a giddy flirt of sixty-six, said he was a naughty old thing, and that she was quite shocked at him, and wondered how he dared to come near her ; and then hid her face with her fan (trimmed with marabouts and a mirror in the centre), and made room for him by her side on the sofa. After this, of course, other thoughtless young creatures, ranging in age from sixty to eighty, could not but follow suit. They owned that he was too bad—a great deal too bad—and the things he said sometimes were really dreadful, my dear, quite dreadful ; but still they listened, and laughed, and told the free old cavalier to go along with him, while they took care not to

lose sight of him, and to pamper, and flatter, and pay court to him. So he occupied an important position in Bath society.

What great things people are always missing by a very little! Arabella Montresor missed being Marchioness of Southernwood by just five minutes. The very night she eloped with handsome Jemmy Simmons, the harlequin—but five minutes before she started—there had been thrown to her from the Southernwood box, a bouquet circling a billet from the Marquis of Southernwood, proffering her his hand in marriage. She smiled her thanks for the bouquet. She never knew of the billet until some time afterwards. How the old gentleman, heated with his wine and trembling with age and excitement, roared applause and thumped his kid-gloved old hands upon the box-cushions till a cloud of dust arose, and his flaxen curls nearly fell into the orchestra! She flung the flowers aside and herself into the arms of her harlequin.

Poor Arabella Montresor—or Eliza Perkins, if you prefer it—stooped to folly with a vengeance. She gave herself away without reserve—an awful sacrifice: and she didn't love the harlequin a bit. It was pure madness, and impulse, and accident.

She was pretty, good—intelligent, if not very accomplished or refined. He was low, dull, selfish, heartless. He had only his good looks, his charming figure, his agile feet, to recommend him. Why then did she marry him? Because she hated Louisa Delafosse, who—poor Louisa!—adored the harlequin.

Louisa was a favourite at the T. R., Bath. The remnant of the old guard honoured her with their especial approval. The old gallants applauded her until their chalk-stoned fingers ached again. She fairly divided the favour of the house with Arabella. And she could sing nicely, too, perfectly in tune; whereas Arabella's ear was defective, and when she attempted to be musical, the audience held their heads. Now, on the occasion of that very eminent tragedian Calverley visiting Bath—secured at an enormous sum for six nights only—Arabella was cast for Gertrude, and the part of Ophelia was given to Louisa Delafosse,—Calverley, of course, appearing in his favourite character of Hamlet. The Queen is not a very grateful *rôle*, and Arabella did not get a hand. But Louisa—what a hit she made—how charmingly she sang! She fairly took away the honours of the evening even

from Calverley. He was in a tremendous rage, of course. He said he had never been so insulted in his life. *She* said that he pinched her shamefully, on purpose, till she nearly screamed in the "go to a nunnery" scene, and that she could and did show the marks of his ill-usage to the whole company for days afterwards. Arabella cried herself to sleep, dreaming of vengeance.

Perhaps she could have overlooked, and in time forgiven, this her rival's triumph. But her troubles were not to end here. The success of Miss Delafosse as Ophelia induced the management to entrust the charming lady with other important parts. Hitherto her position in the theatre had not been a high one. She had only smiled and sung in burlettas, or prattled and danced in farces. She had even been one of the fairies—how derogatory! but then her figure was very admirable—in the opening scenes of the pantomime. Now she was told to study Cordelia, to play to Calverley's Lear:—Desdemona to Calverley's Othello. Arabella was to be content with Goneril—with Emilia. So the night before one of these disgraces was to be inflicted upon her, after playing Mrs. Beverley to a crowded house, and after the episode of the

Southernwood bouquet, Miss Montresor ran away with Jemmy Simmons. She would make her rival, she said, pay a high price for her success—that price was the harlequin. The news was brought to Miss Delafosse during her performance of Cordelia, and she went straightway into hysterics on the stage. Her screams quite terrified the audience. The Marquis of Southernwood was extremely angry. He looked quite livid, by contrast with the velvet cushions of his box. He hated to hear even, much more see anything of illness. “Don’t let that woman come on the stage again!” he screamed with an oath. His will was law.

Jemmy Simmons was of the style of beauty which women and hair-dressers have agreed to estimate very highly. The reader will not require that he should be more particularly described. For Arabella, she was avenged: and, of course, miserable for the rest of her life. She soon probed to the bottom of her husband’s motive for marrying her. She was simply in his eyes the woman who drew the largest salary in the theatre. They quarrelled desperately. He would have beaten her if he had dared. He contented himself with squandering her money. He could

do nothing on the stage but dance. He had no other talent of any kind whatever. He was a good harlequin, that was all; but he was a favourite with the public, and always commanded a good engagement at Christmas. At last his habits began to tell upon him; he failed in his leaps; he fell down in his dances; the stage manager apologized to the house:—Mr. Simmons had sprained his ankle at the rehearsal that morning; indulgence was requested, and, of course, given with applause. What a wretchedly deboshed sot he was, in spite of his splendid figure and his beautifully spangled dress! But at last his figure went. He grew fat, his breath became so short, he could no longer play through the part. Handsome Jemmy Simmons's harlequin days were over for ever.

Arabella Montresor had by her marriage lost the chance of advancement in her profession. Even if she had declined to become Marchioness of Southernwood, she might have secured, through his lordship's interest, a liberal engagement on metropolitan boards. But her marriage, and then her family! Young Simmonses began to flock round her, and she looked very matronly; she grew stout; her complexion might almost be called rubicund now.

She wearied of wandering about from town to town in the provinces. An engagement had been offered her at the Paroquet Theatre, Hoxton, and she had accepted it. The terms were not very liberal: but a permanency was secured. The Simmons' family wandered no more. They settled in the house at the corner of Coppice Row.

Mr. Simmons—he could fairly be called Jemmy no longer—the father of a large family, and the husband of Mrs. Montresor (so she was called in the bills of the Paroquet), Mr. Simmons was no longer handsome. A fat man, with a meaningless face, hiding his bald head in a Glengarry cap—with dull, sodden-looking eyes and husky voice; his beauty had gone with his spangles. He had been always fond of smoking pipes and reading the papers: there was a sort of ironical justice in fixing the man behind the counter of a shop that dealt in tobacco and news. He yielded to his wife now more than he had done in his old, gay, good-looking times. She insisted upon his doing work of some kind, or she knew that he would be at mischief, which, in his case, meant the public-house. So he presided over the news-shop; upon the express stipulation,

however, that he was not to be called upon to interfere in any of the arrangements of the other parts of the house. Mrs. Simmons was an industrious, hard-working woman. She let as many rooms as she could spare to lodgers; she superintended the whole house; and with her lodgers, and her children, and her appearances as the heroine of Paroquet melodramas, indeed she had enough to do.

Mr. Phelp Gossett (he answered also to the name of "Phil"), student at St. Lazarus's Hospital, was one of Mr. Simmons's lodgers. He had come up from the country, to pursue his medical studies in the metropolis. He had at first taken expensive apartments at the West End of the town. Gradually, however, the straitened condition of his funds had compelled him to remove to less costly regions; and he had drifted away accordingly, like a ship ineffectually anchored, until he had run ashore at Coppice Row. Mrs. Simmons welcomed him to her first floor. Other people might possibly have objected to a medical student lodger. At least, I have understood that lodging-house keepers often do object, on the ground that, as a class, medical students are addicted to noise. But Mrs. Simmons made

no demur. She was accustomed to noise; she had been in noise all her life; she was noisy herself (particularly in last acts at the Paroquet); her husband was often noisy (especially when he came home late at night—unwell); her children were always noisy. Mr. Gossett was at liberty to make as much noise as he pleased, provided he paid for his rooms.

Mr. Gossett availed himself to the full of his privileges in Mrs. Simmons's house. But, perhaps, he was not noisy precisely in the way contemplated. Ostensibly, he studied medicine; in reality, it would seem, he practised music. Through all his wanderings from house to house, from the West End to Coppice Row—and he had tarried in a good many apartments on his way—moving when the noise he made was objected to, or his purse became too light—he had carried with him his dearly-beloved piccolo piano, and, of course, his grand, deep bass voice. He was for ever thumping on his piccolo; he was for ever bawling out bass melodies, or busied in producing notes of a depth and volume sufficiently alarming to his audience. He studied fierce dramatic music; he affected long, passionate scenas, of a wild and demoniac character. He was acquainted

more especially, it may be noted, with the music of the parts of Caspar in *Der Freischütz* and Bertram in *Robert le Diable*. He frightened the infant Simmonses dreadfully at first with his vehement delivery of incantation music. Even Mr. Simmons admitted that, in all his life, he had never heard so powerful a voice—"He never 'ad, never, though he'd known 'Icks of Birmingham, who was thought a sight of for lungs, as likewise Borleigh and Barker; but he didn't think they come up to Mr. Gossett, blessed if he did—not for row." While Mrs. Simmons was of opinion that Mr. Gossett had decided operatic talent. Mr. Gossett was pleased with this homage; he decided to remain in Coppice Row, and sung thenceforth louder than ever. He permitted his moustache to grow as long as it would, and brushed back his hair from his face; it was said at one time that he "shaved up," as the technical term is; that is, that he made himself artificially bald, shaving his hair to a peak on his forehead, turning up the points of his moustache, and cultivating a tuft upon his chin, to carry out thoroughly the prescribed theatrical notion of a demon bass singer. Such was the friend of crippled Robin Hooper—Philip Gossett, of St. Lazarus's

Hospital, medical student—in whose rooms a poor, fainting, friendless woman had been nursed by Mrs. Simmons and attended by Dr. Hawkshaw.

She had now been removed, however—very weak and suffering—to another part of the house, but the friends were still occupied with the strange occurrence. If for a few minutes they wandered from it to other topics, they were always sure to return to it again. There was in it for them, actors in the scene, a kind of fascination.

Robin lay curled on the sofa, exhausted and fatigued, yet wakeful and restless from nervous excitement: his back dreadfully twisted, and his head deeply sunk in his shoulders, his thin fingers plaiting themselves together, and his eyes hectically bright. His sensibilities were ever acutely, almost painfully alive—his organization febrile, his fancy morbidly vivid. If pain were inflicted on another in his presence, he seemed to suffer by the reflection of it—he writhed and winced with the sufferer. He was haunted by that pale face and look of pain.

Phil Gossett had been interested—alarmed even; but the impression was wearing off, for now some hours had passed. He was able to hum at intervals, and as in his heavy promenades

about the room he neared the corner in which his piccolo was placed, he could seldom resist playing (with the soft pedal down) a few notes of one of his favourite airs, or gently testing his depth of voice by the piano. He did this, however, without too much noise; for Robin had more than once implored him to desist, lest any annoyance should be occasioned to Dr. Hawshaw's patient upstairs.

"How I wish," said Robin, "that I had studied medicine."

"You made a good beginning, Rob, though it seems quite a long time now since you were entered at St. Lazarus."

"Ah! but I couldn't go on. It killed me, that place. To see all those poor suffering people in the wards turning their sad eyes to me as I entered. I never grew reconciled to it. It was just as dreadful to me every day. I could shut my eyes and yet see their faces, as I can see her's now. Will the colour never come back? Will her eyes always shine so—like stars, in her hollow face? I wonder how she is now, Phil—shall I go and ask Mrs. Simmons?"

"Better not. She's a good soul; she'll do all she can, I'll answer for her. How kind she was

to me when I had that bad throat, you remember. Besides, it's all right now, you know; Hawkshaw said so."

"But do *you* think so, Phil? *Really?* Don't cheat me with telling me so, if you don't think so really. I'm quite well and strong now, and calm. You knew I could bear to hear it."

"Let me feel your pulse. Feverish, old boy, feverish. You're not too strong, Rob."

"But I could bear to hear the truth."

"You thought you could bear the dissecting-room—do you remember? Yet you swooned dead away."

"Don't speak of it;" and Robin covered his face with his hands. Then he started up. "But I could bear this, Phil. After all, what is it? A woman picked half-dead out of the streets—whom I have never seen before—whom, likely enough, I shall never see again—what does it matter to me whether she lives or dies? I say, Phil, why should I care?—Yet no"—and he shuddered—"for God's sake, don't let me talk like that! Yes, it *does* matter—*dead*—it would be cruel suffering to me. Tell me you don't think she'll die, Phil—do tell me so!"

"This is what you call calmness, is it? Why,

you're all of a tremble, you silly old Rob you. No; I tell you, I don't think she'll die. Her state was a little critical for a time. Hawkshaw owned as much; but it's all right now. Hawkshaw wouldn't have left her if he hadn't been sure of that."

"Thank you, Phil."

"And now you'd better get some rest, Rob; though I fear Arnold will be anxious about you."

"He knew I was coming here; and, indeed, he must forgive me, for I cannot go now; not that I'm sleepy, but I want to hear how she goes on."

"I little thought when I heard your knock, Rob, of all that was going to happen. I looked forward to lots of music. You've a jolly tenor. I'm certain we could manage that '*Ah l'honnête homme*' duet splendidly. Shall we try softly, just for five minutes?"

"No," said the cripple, firmly; "I wouldn't do it for worlds."

Mr. Gossett saw that his friend was in earnest, and, with a sigh, closed the piano.

CHAPTER VI.

DR. HAWKSHAW'S PATIENT.

MRS. SIMMONS entered a small room on an upper floor in the house in Coppice Row, treading very softly indeed. You would hardly have imagined that a lady of her size could have passed along so lightly. For the figure of Arabella Montresor was much less delicate than it had been; she had increased in weight since the time when she was playing, at Bath, Mrs. Beverley in *The Gamester* to the delight of the late lamented fifth marquis of Southernwood.

Mrs. Simmons advanced to a bed on which a fragile-looking, pallid woman was lying, apparently asleep. Very beautiful, notwithstanding her wanness and want of colour; yet with something of the awfulness of a corpse, as she lay there so white and motionless. But she lived. You could see the drapery of the bed

gently stir; you could watch the trembling and swaying about of a soft lock of hair that had fallen about her face, as her breath rose and fell in heavy and protracted sighs. Very beautiful! Her long fair hair—of the hue the ancients would have called “honey-coloured,” and the old Italian masters have loved with true and intense art-love—floating from her face in undulating lines, encircling her head like the golden nimbus of a saint. How abundant those tresses, how graceful, how admirable, with a ripple on them as of a sea smiling and sparkling in the amber of sunrise!

For some moments Mrs. Simmons stood contemplating the sleeper, almost as though retained by a kind of fascination. Then moved by a sudden thought, she knelt down to look at the woman's left hand—very small, and soft, and of a charming form, resting outside the coverlet. She ventured even to touch the hand, turning it gently so that she might the better examine it. Still the woman slept on.

“No,” Mrs. Simmons said to herself, and she was examining, it would seem, more particularly the third finger of the hand. “No, there is no ring.”

Then she took up a handkerchief of cambric edged with lace.

“A very pretty handkerchief.”

She turned to each corner separately, in search of the name or initials of the owner. In one corner she noticed a small hole cut or torn, it was not quite clear which.

“The name has been cut out. Why, I wonder? Who is she? Why has she come here? What does it all mean? Surely, under all the circumstances, there can be no harm in searching her pockets?”

Perhaps, before she had time to answer her own question, Mrs. Simmons was busy with the dress of the sleeper, and had turned over many small articles found in the pocket.

“She’s well dressed; quietly, but very nicely; a gold watch and chain, brooch and small earrings, two keys, a portmounaie, with some gold in it, and some silver coins; what are they? French I should think; and these? Why, surely these must be Indian; and what’s this? A scrap of paper with an address on it, half rubbed out. I can’t read the first word. Something House, Kew, it looks like. Why, surely——”

She paused, passing her hand across her fore-

head, with rather a theatrical manner. Unconsciously, perhaps, she had raised the tone of her voice; perhaps the habits of her life rendered it unavoidable that she should favour loudness of speech and decided gesticulation.

"Surely, she cannot have escaped from an asylum?"

She stood still glancing upwards, in a manner she had found attractive at the Paroquet, as though she had particularly addressed herself to the occupants of the seats in the front row of the gallery.

"No! she is not mad, my life upon it. Soft! She wakes!"

At the Paroquet this would of course have been the cue for the band to have played slow and mysterious music, with muted violins. Mrs. Simmons, with theatrical stealthiness, and as though keeping time to imaginary chords, moved towards the bed.

The woman opened her eyes: like dead violets, they were so beautiful in colour, and yet for the moment light and life were so entirely absent from them.

"Where am I?" she asked, softly raising her hands languidly to her head. There was a

look of trouble, bewilderment, alarm, upon her face.

“Don’t be frightened,” said Mrs. Simmons ;
“you are quite safe now.”

“Where am I ?” she repeated.

“You are quite safe ; you are among friends.”

“Friends ? Have I any friends ?” She appeared to be trying to recollect ; she shuddered.

“Surely you have friends,” said the actress, drawing the bed-clothes round the invalid. Then in answer to her glance of inquiry, she continued,
“Am I not your friend ?”

“You will help me ?”

“To be sure I will,” Mrs. Simmons exclaimed, stoutly.

A footstep was heard outside the door.

“Too much talking, I think,” said Dr. Hawkshaw, entering.

A thin gaunt hard-looking man with wiry, iron-gray, short-cut hair ; with high cheek-bones, and little scraps of whiskers sprouting on their summits. Untidily dressed ; a crumpled white cravat twisted round his neck ; long cuffs to his coat—when he turned these back, a severe “operation” sort of look was given to his long, sallow, nervous hands—a heavy watch-chain

swinging from his fob. His dress was not planned to be professional. When, years back, he had commenced practice, he had assumed the style of attire customary among gentlemen of the middle class; and he had been too busy ever since to study the varyings of fashion, or to make any change in the cut or colour of his clothes. His patients were a little afraid of him at first, for his manner was not immediately conciliating; he was severe in tone and abrupt in action; but they relied upon him the more in the end. There was such an air of strength and soundness about him; and certainly in those small, mobile, gray eyes of his, when you had got to know him thoroughly, you could read much kindness and real tenderness of heart. Above all you should have heard how the students of St. Lazarus's spoke of him, and how they relished his sturdy, sagacious, eminently practical lectures.

"You're better," he said to his patient. "You've slept pretty well. Still you're giddy, and sickly, and weak, and you haven't a ha'porth of appetite, I should think. However, we'll soon put all that right. How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

“What’s your name?”

“Janet,” she murmured after a pause.

“Janet what?” he asked sternly, but not rudely. “That’s only half a name.”

She looked troubled, and turned away her eyes from her questioner: a faint blush dawned on her pale face. Something she said at last, but in a very low voice. The doctor bent down, the better to hear.

“Janet Milne?” he inquired, as though doubtful whether he had heard aright.

She bowed her head.

“Well, Miss Janet Milne——” he continued; then he paused as though waiting for correction, looking at her curiously, but she did not speak. “You must be careful how you over-fatigue and frighten yourself again, or the consequences may be even more serious. But we’ll take care of you this time, and soon make you well. Mrs. Simmons is an excellent nurse. Keep yourself as quiet as you can. Do you wish to send to any friends or relations to let them know where you are, or tell them how you are going on?”

“No,” she answered eagerly.

“You have friends, relations?”

“None.”

"Where do you live; where is your home?"

"I have no home."

"Hum!" The doctor withdrew. Out of the room, he spoke to Mrs. Simmons.

"She's telling stories," he said. "Never mind; don't worry her with questions just at present; she's still in a highly nervous state. What has she done? where does she come from? She's young, pretty, isn't she? at least I should say passable. I don't consider myself a judge of such matters. What can have happened to her?"

"I think it must be somehow connected with a love affair," Mrs. Simmons suggested. Her theatrical experiences had taught her that love occasioned many complications—at any rate on the stage.

"Perhaps so. I've heard that love is a dangerous disease; but I'm not sure of it's diagnosis. It's not in the medical books, and they don't bring the love-sick to the hospital, thank heaven!" The doctor seemed to be only half in jest.

"People in love, or who fancy themselves in love, do very extraordinary things," Mrs. Simmons observed.

It is possible that her thoughts were re-

curring to certain remarkable events in her own life.

“So I’ve heard,” the doctor said drily; “but, as far as I can make out, love proceeds in most cases from the stomach, and those suffer the most from it who have weak chests and bad digestions, and don’t take sufficient exercise. I *have* heard it attributed to the heart; but that I don’t believe. It cannot be the same thing as fatty degeneration, though it may look like it. Good-by. By the way, if you see Mr. Gossett tell him I’m sorry he wasn’t at lecture this morning. That’s his voice, I’m sure. Singing he calls that? Does he, indeed? Dear me; I wonder what sort of noise he would make, now, to represent howling or roaring. Good-by. Take care of Miss Milne. I’ll look round to-morrow.”

“The shop empty!—where’s Simmons? Oh, if he’s gone again to that *Spotted Dog*! What do you want, my little man?” (This to a customer.) “I’m sure I don’t know where to find No. 150 of the *Revelations of a Lady’s-maid*; and what *has* become of my part in the *Lone Hut on the Moor, or the Murderer and the Marquis*! I put it down somewhere for half a minute, and now I can’t think where I did put it. I hope the children haven’t

got hold of it—or the cat. Ever so many lengths, and not a line do I know of it yet; and have I—gracious heaven!—I do believe I have *not* got a clean white muslin frock for the last act. I will *not* go down on my knees on that filthy stage in my new blue silk. I will *not*, I say; and Nancy, *do* hold the baby's back straight, and mind its precious head; and have you cleaned the front attic's boots? And Mr. Gossett ringing for coals and a pint of half-and-half. Oh, dear, dear me; who would be me, I should like to know, if they could be anybody else?"

Poor Mrs. Simmons, *née* Arabella Montresor; or, to be very particular, Eliza Perkins!

Some days later Robin Hooper and Mr. Lackington were conversing.

"Now, tell me, Rob," said Mr. Lackington, "is there any more news about the fairy of the fog? You knight-errant, have you been rescuing any more maidens in distress? Have you discovered anything more about her?"

"I have not discovered more about her, for one reason, perhaps, that I have not tried to do so. What right have I, or has any one, to pry into her history. Was it not enough to know that she was poor and suffering and needing assistance?"

“I’m half afraid of you, Rob, when you put on your chivalric air. I feel like a modern snob running up against a gentleman of the chain-mail period. I confess I’m caitiff enough—isn’t ‘caitiff’ the right word, Rob, under all the circumstances of the case?—to be curious in the matter; Gossett tells me she’s beautiful.”

“She is very beautiful.”

“With golden hair, eh? I should like to see her. I should like to make a sketch of her. I’ve a notion of painting a woman with golden hair dressed in sea-green satin sitting in a punt gathering water-lilies; a fierce red sunset gleaming upon her through very tall rushes. Wouldn’t it look well, Rob? I don’t know what it would mean in the least; but I think the meaning of a picture should always be left to the spectator, don’t you?”

“I don’t see why painters should trouble themselves or the spectators with painting conundrums.”

“You know you always leave the moral of a fable to be guessed. But about this fairy of the fog. Who is she? How is she? What’s she going to do? Do you think she would sit to me for the lady in the punt?”

"Her name is Janet Milne; she has reasons I believe for making no further revelation regarding herself; she is much better; she is still with Mrs. Simmons; she will endeavour to obtain pupils and so earn a subsistence, for she is poor—she has avowed that much; I do not think she would care to sit to you. Now you know as much as I do concerning her. I seek to know no more than she chooses to make known. It seems to me that we are bound to respect her desires in this respect, and if we can aid her in any other way that we are also bound to do so. I know that *I* will, to the utmost of my power."

"You've the heart of a Bayard, Rob."

"In a very weak and crippled and broken-down body, Jack."

"Has Arnold seen her, this mysterious lady?"

"No. I have told him about her, and he has promised to render his assistance in any plan for her benefit."

"Should I see her if I were to call at Mrs. Simmons'?"

"Probably not."

"Ah! Rob, you are locking up your treasure very securely! Are you afraid lest she should

fall in love with any one else : with me for instance ? It sounds very monstrously, of course ; but I *have* been loved ; women are so weak and illogical ; or with Arnold, say ? Of course, Mr. Robin Bayard, by all the laws of three volume novels, she *ought* to be in love with you ; but if she shouldn't be ? ”

“ For shame Jack,” cried Rob, fervently, “ how can you speak in this way of her, of me ? Do you respect nothing, no one ? ”

“ I beg your pardon.”

“ How can you speak of Arnold so ? ”

“ Oh, by the way, yes. I forgot about Arnold. He's out of the question, of course ; that is, I should think he was. He's received his sentence, poor fellow. We may speak of him as a ‘ lifer,’ I suppose. Have you seen the lady, Rob ? ”

“ Yes ; my father's farm is on Mr. Carr's estate. I have often seen her down in Woodlandshire.”

“ Arnold showed me her picture. He'd painted it himself. Deuced well, too, I can tell you. Arnold would succeed in the fine arts if he had but application. That's the great thing, Rob. It struck me that she was a very nice-looking

girl, with superb brown eyes; but she's little, I believe; a sort of chimney-ornament Cleopatra, isn't she, Rob?"

"I don't like the definition; Cleopatra I never admired. Her fierceness, coarseness, muscularity, it seems to me, nearly extinguish her fascination. There is nothing of these about Leonora Carr. She is proud-spirited; an only child, an heiress, and has been in some danger of being spoiled. But she is very charming—a sort of Titania from a brunette point of view; very delicate and sprightly, tender and winning. I marvel no more that Arnold should love her, than that she should love Arnold. I think there is every promise of happiness in their union."

"Yes, for them; but for us?"

Robin looked as though he did not understand.

"There seems to me something selfish about matrimony, which people haven't properly taken into account. It's like two people in a large party separating from the rest, sitting down, and getting absorbed in a game of chess, instead of contributing to the general amusement of the company."

"What do you mean? What would you do?"

Abolish marriage? I believe, Jack, you are no better than a Mormon," said Robin, laughing.

"Don't you see that Arnold's marriage will abolish *us*? We may be *his* friends; do you think we shall be Mrs. P.'s? I fancy that when the wife informs the husband that she'd rather not receive his friend Mr. So-and-so, somehow the husband in time leaves off bringing that gentleman home to dinner. Arnold will drop us, Rob, in plain words."

"Arnold will be good and true, as he has ever been," said Robin hotly.

"Well, well, we shall see. Any news of Hugh Wood?"

"He's gone into the country to stop at the rectory. I don't think he's very comfortable there. He's not very good friends with his father, I'm afraid. They never get on well together somehow."

"I've a notion about Hugh Wood, which I'll tell you some day. Hallo, do you hear that noise? It sounds like an earthquake; it's only Phil Gossett singing. He's discovered another low note in his voice, an awful depth, it seems to come out of the heels of his boots. How are you, Phil, old

man. Now, you fellows, strike up duets while I smoke. I don't know which aids the art-mind the most, music or tobacco; we'll decide to-night. Perhaps one of you has got silver enough to pay for some beer. Thank you, Rob."

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CHAPTER VII.

A SCHOOL-FRIEND.

“I THINK, Miss Bigg,” said Leonora to the schoolmistress, “that you do not sufficiently consider the change that has taken place in our relative positions. I am no longer your pupil. I claim to have some influence here. I am about to be connected, by marriage” (she blushed a little, lowering her eyes here), “with the young ladies who have just quitted the room. I shall probably have some voice then in their education. I am also acquainted, intimately in some cases, with the families of others among your pupils. I think, upon consideration, you will decide that it is not advisable to compel me to return to town without seeing little Barbara Gill.”

Leo spoke very calmly, without raising her voice, without movement or action. Her tones were very silvery, yet they were firm, decided. Altogether, there was a determined air about the

little lady. It was evident that she did not intend to be trifled with or denied. The schoolmistress quailed before her.

"Miss Gill is not well," she said at last, feebly.

"I am aware of that fact. It is an additional reason for my desiring to see her."

Miss Bigg looked uncomfortable. She drew the folds of her shawl nervously together. She complained, in a mutter, that it was "chilly," though her face shone and the stiff curls of her front grew quite dank with heat. She fidgeted with the poet Bigg's sublime work on the table, and nearly pulled the streamers off the bookmarker inscribed "Read, mark, digest." Her head swayed to and fro with a sort of palsied action.

"It is not usual," she began at last, "for any but the relatives of the young ladies under my charge——"

"Pardon me, Miss Bigg, that is not the question. Will you be good enough to inform me whether I am or not to be allowed to see Miss Gill?"

The schoolmistress rolled her handkerchief into a hard tight ball, and with it pressed her

eyes by turns severely. There were no tears rendering this proceeding necessary; but it is probably one of the rules of grief that the fewer tears you can produce the more you are bound to apply your handkerchief. For wet mourning cambric is of course desirable—but for dry it is indispensable.

“Leonora! how *can* you?” Miss Bigg sobbed, shaking the words out of herself with an effort, as she rocked to and fro upon her chair. “To think that I should be thus spoken to by a former esteemed pupil! What would my late sister Adelaide have said? What would have been the feelings of my late father, the poet Bigg, upon such an occasion. To think that anybody who had received the blessings of education at Chapone House, Kew Green, should be able afterwards to address me in such a way. How shocking! How awful, I may say! And you, Leonora! above all others! upon whom I have lavished a maternal affection, an unceasing solicitude, beyond anything mentioned in the prospectus or to be expected at an establishment of this nature.”

“Miss Bigg,” Leo said, quite calmly, “I really think you had better give me an answer. Mamma

is waiting in the carriage, and will be anxious to return to town."

"Miss Gill is very ill. There," Dorothea answered pettishly.

"You have had medical advice, of course? What doctor is in attendance upon the poor child?"

"Who do you suppose was to pay the doctor's bill?"

"You have had no doctor? Oh, Miss Bigg, how shameful!" said little Leo, looking very moved and angry.

Dorothea's head shook, like the head of a practicable Chinese figure roughly handled.

"It's very easy to talk about doctors," she jerked out; "to hear *some* people talk one would think that doctors cost nothing. But then *some* people will send for the doctor when their little finger aches. I don't. I never have, and I never will. Let *other* people say or do or think what they may."

Miss Dorothea followed a habit I notice to be favoured by her sex, of resorting to innuendo in her angriest moments. As certain marksmen hit one mark by aiming at another, so Miss Bigg sought to wound Leo, not so much by a direct

and individual attack, as by a general onslaught upon a host of "other people." It is just as well to fire into a covey as to wait and single out a particular bird.

"You tell me, Miss Bigg," said Leo, quite calmly, her voice and manner in charming contrast with the schoolmistress's snappishness and loss of temper—"You tell me that little Barbara is seriously ill—so ill that I may not see her—so ill that, as I understand it, you have thought it advisable to separate her entirely from the other young ladies, your pupils: and yet you have not called in medical aid! Is there not something very strange about this, Miss Bigg? Does it not strike you that when Mrs. Lomax comes to be informed that a pupil at Chapone House has been treated in this extraordinary way, her confidence in the mistress of the school will be very much shaken, and that she will be prompted at once to remove her children from your care?"

There was evident indecision in Miss Bigg's proceedings. She wavered between submission and resistance. She was now weak and supposititiously tearful. Anon she was spasmodically strong and angry. Again she brought her tennis-

ball of a handkerchief to bear upon her eyes, pressing them painfully.

“I never would have believed, Leonora, that *you* would have turned against me like this—that *you* would have tried to injure me. Your old mistress, who did all she could for your happiness here; who favoured you beyond any of the other young ladies, till they grew quite jealous on the subject—quite. Were you not allowed to write home oftener? to have more pocket-money? to have more sugar in your tea? Was I ever so strict with you as with everybody else? Didn’t I give you when you left, with my own hands, a copy of my late father’s sublime work, bound in whole calf? Didn’t I inform your dear mamma that you were the best conducted pupil who had ever entered the seminary? And after all the pains I have taken with your religious and moral culture, to think I should be treated like this! Threatened even! and by my most favoured pupil. But I was too partial. I spoiled you. I am rightly punished; as we sow so we must reap. I receive the reward of my weakness, my folly, my injustice. Yet who would have believed in conduct so unche-ristian-like emanating from a pupil of Chapone House?”

In the extremity of her indignation Miss Bigg put this question, not to Leonora, but over her head—to where the picture of the poet cooling his bottle-nose over the marble mantelpiece, to where the fancy sketch of the late Adelaide in a turban, in the character of St. Cecilia, before the patent mangle and the gas pipes, adorned the walls. The appeal was so emphatic and vehement it was almost a marvel that the painted semblances of Miss Bigg's departed relatives made no reply. It is but justice to say, however, that Leonora was but slightly stirred by it. She rose from her chair.

“I am to understand, then, Miss Bigg, that you refuse my request.”

“Don't, my dear child, don't talk to me like that. What can little Miss Gill be to you?”

“She is very much to me,” said Leonora; “and I must see her.”

“But if her illness should be something dangerous—something infectious?”

“Can it be so, Miss Bigg? Can there even be a chance of this, and you have not called in medical assistance?”

“Ah, Leonora, you little understand how often a person in my position is made the victim of

cruel injustice. I seldom speak upon these subjects. I try to make no difference between my pupils; if I made a difference in your case, Leonora, it was not without an effort to the contrary, and, as I said, I am punished. I do all I can to avoid distinctions, even in carving or distributing the gravy at dinner, or the daily punishments, or the prizes at the close of the half-year. I try to forget that while for one child I am paid punctually, as sure as the Bank of England, for another I have to make application after application, half-year after half-year, and still I fail to obtain payment. The money that has been lost to the school in this way! and sometimes the more distinguished the family of the pupil, the more intimate its connexions with the aristocratic families of the country, as detailed in that book on the table—*The Peerage and Baronetage of the United Kingdom*—the more difficulty, my dear, has arisen in my receiving payment of my accounts.”

“I regret to hear all this, of course, Miss Bigg,” said Leonora, with a glance of surprise; “but I don’t really see what it has to do with the question whether I am or not to see poor Miss Gill.”

“Don’t, my dear, don’t,” cried Dorothea, “I’m coming to that. How I contrive to keep my head above water and the seminary open is more, I’m sure, than I can explain. And the young people consigned to me from the colonies—admirably recommended, most unquestionable references—young people handed over to my entire and absolute charge, to board, and clothe, and educate; to maintain even during the holidays; to have every extra; to learn everything mentioned in the prospectus; their bringing up to be of the most choice, and elaborate, and expensive character; and yet even for these, would you believe it, the money is often not forthcoming! My dear, it’s ruin, positive ruin; a few more consignments of this sort and I shall be actually deprived of house and home. And how can one obtain payment? And what can one do with the children? One must keep them; one can’t turn them out of the place; and yet who is to find means for their support?”

“Well, Miss Bigg——”

“Be patient, my dear. Take the case of this child Gill. For four years has she been an inmate of this institution. Her father an officer in India. Most highly recommended to me. The child

consigned to me. What could I do but receive it? Could I foresee what would happen? Could I imagine that not one shilling should I receive for the maintenance and education of that child? I have written letter after letter; each mail carries out a fresh application for the discharge of my account, or at least a portion of it. I receive no reply—not the slightest notice is given to my letters—not a halfpenny of payment made to me. What can I do? Can flesh and blood bear this sort of thing? And yet what redress have I? What am I to do with the child? I must go on keeping her until I hear from India, or until doomsday, I suppose.”

“I had no idea of this, Miss Bigg.”

“No. I have made a point of concealing these things from my pupils and from their friends and relatives. It would do no good to the school if these circumstances were made known and talked about. And now, to crown the matter, the child’s ill—perhaps has even brought infection into the school. Suppose it’s scarlet fever, and every girl catches it, and the school is broken up; what’s to become of me then, I should like to know?”

“Why should you think the child’s illness

infectious? You say you have called in no doctor."

"I can't afford it; that's the simple answer and explanation. There is quite enough money owing to me on Miss Gill's account without a long doctor's bill being added to it. I have done what I can for her; and I've kept her separate from the other pupils. I'm bound to consider them; and for the future——"

"For the future," Leonora interrupted, "*I* will see that you are paid all charges in regard to Miss Gill; and I will see that the best medical advice is obtained for her. And now, if you please, you will show me to Miss Gill's room."

"You persist in seeing her?"

"I have said I will not leave the house until I have done so."

"Booth shall take you to her room," said Dorothea, subdued as she rang the bell. "I have made the best arrangements for her that were possible under the circumstances. They are not, however, quite so comfortable as I could wish."

Booth entered the room: a middle-aged woman, in a rusty cinnamon-coloured silk dress, a plain frowning woman, who had been many

years attached to the establishment, in the character of superior servant or housekeeper, and had in some way, either by persistence in paying her mistress the compliment of imitation, or, from the resemblance, said to be produced by constant association, grown to look like a sort of duplicate or cheap edition of Miss Bigg. She had the same hard screwed-up ringlets in petrified coils upon her forehead; the same grim smile—being not so much a smile, indeed, as a cheerless exhibition of teeth and gums; the same forbidding brow and dull black eyes—like unpolished ebony; but she was not nearly so tall as Miss Dorothea, while she was much stouter in figure. She had endeavoured to struggle with her contour and suppress her roundness by means of increased tightness of dress; this imparted a stuffed, pincushion look to her shoulders and their vicinity, the notion of that semblance being enhanced by the fact that pin-heads were to be traced projecting from various portions of her figure. Upon provocation she had even been known to produce a dozen or so from her mouth quite unexpectedly, like a conjuror. She had been a great favourite of the late Miss Adelaide Bigg, who had, upon one occasion, spoken of

her as "that inestimable woman, Booth." It had become the fashion after this to recognize her at every opportunity as an "inestimable woman;" though this was not the opinion of the pupils. When the honourable, witty, and pretty Miss Pincott was a pupil at Chapone House (she was afterwards the third wife of John Logwood, the second Baron Lambeth, and distinguished for her zealous patronage of religious potichomanie, stained-glass windows, poetic literature and Puseyism), she used to call Booth "Sarnem," and Miss Adelaide Bigg, who was then living, "Gesler," the young lady assigning to herself the *rôle* of William Tell, and heading a mutiny of the other young ladies against the constituted authorities, which resulted ultimately in her removal from the seminary. These nicknames, however, still lingered among the school traditions, as, indeed, did the story of pretty Miss Pincott's revolt. Insubordinate pupils were often known to speak of Booth as "Sarnem" still; but of course her fidelity to the heads of the establishment was a sufficient cause for her being held in severe reprobation by the young ladies. She was not a very pleasant person — Booth — from any other than Miss Bigg's point of view.

Her religious opinions, it may be stated, were of a particularly depressing nature. Notwithstanding, she seemed quite to rejoice in their gloom, much as lovers enjoy dusk. She described Miss Dorothea as a "gospel-woman," whatever that might be. She called going to church "sitting under a minister," and indulged occasionally in other phrases of like mystery. She considered herself and Miss Bigg as "of the elect," holding probably that they had by an admirable foresight secured reserved seats in a state of future bliss, whereas other people must go in with the crush, or take themselves elsewhere. Her sentiments, indeed, in that respect might be described as possessing a decidedly sulphuric flavour.

"Will you please to step this way, Miss Carr?" said Booth: and she conducted Leo from the gaunt drawing-room. They passed up the wide handsome staircase of Chapone House. The upper flights of stairs were shabby-looking, tortuous, ill-lighted, narrow. There was no gay ribbon of many-coloured carpet down the centre, no dapper margin of pure white—mere tawny deal, unpainted, creaking, with unsteady balusters. They were shut from the view of the

superior parts of the house by a door kept constantly closed.

Up these dark steps, her silken skirts rustling and whistling angrily against the sides of the limited, ill-lighted path, Leo passed, convoyed by Booth. They stopped at a door, and entered together a small low-roofed attic. The room was clean, but comfortless-looking; the slanting walls made very acute angles of the side of the chamber, lighted by a small window cut in the ceiling as it seemed; but, indeed, it was hard to say where the ceiling ended and the walls commenced. It was some few minutes before Leo's eyes became sufficiently accustomed to the light of the room to distinguish that on a small bed in a corner, the only canopy a slope in the whitewashed roof, the figure of a little girl, apparently asleep, lay curled up, a crumpled stream of light flaxen hair upon the pillow, and her thin arms stretched forth, the hands with the palms upwards, and the fingers flaccidly curled.

"Is she asleep?" Leo inquired in a whisper, turning to Booth.

"She's fond of shamming, I think, Miss Carr," Booth answered harshly. "She's often drowsy, though, of late. Come; wake up, Miss; you're

wanted," she called, in a grating voice, to the child.

"Hush! don't speak to her like that," Leo interrupted somewhat angrily. She approached the bed and stooped down the better to examine the face of the child—very wan and sharp-featured and pale, save where a blotch of scarlet glowed unnaturally upon her cheek bones.

"Oh, my poor Baby, how you are changed!" Leo cried in a moved voice, the tears leaping to her eyes and her heart in a tremble. "What a little thin hand! Oh, and how it burns! My poor, poor Baby!"

"Yes, she's very feverish. But I think she's getting better. I give her nothing but gruel; she's very weak, or she pretends to be. I think she shams a good deal, to try and get off learning her hymns. But I'm as sharp as she is, that's one comfort."

"Baby, dear," said Leo, softly calling her, and pressing tenderly the wasted burning little hand.

"Come, look sharp," cried Booth.

"You needn't trouble yourself any further, Booth, thank you," said Leo; and there was something in the tone of her voice that made the superior servant draw back.

Slowly the child opened her large blue eyes, fixing them upon Leo, but in a scared, doubting way at first; then, as if shrinking from the conviction they forced upon her.

"Leo?" she murmured at last in a tone of inquiry.

"Yes, Baby, it's Leo come to see you."

"Dear Leo," said the child, and she held out her arms, trying to circle Leo's neck, while her eyes gleamed with a hectic lustre, and she raised her head pouting her parched lips. How well Leo knew the action, and she kissed again and again her little school-friend, hugging her frail form close to her heart.

"Oh, Leo, I thought you would never come. I thought you had forgotten me quite. I thought I should die and never see you again."

"Forgive me, Baby, I've been very wrong to stay so long away from you; but indeed I did not know that you were ill—indeed, I had not really forgotten you—only for the moment, Baby, dear."

"I have so longed to see you: I have so often thought of you. I would have written to you if I could—if Miss Bigg would have let me, and if my hand hadn't shaken so. There's no one now to be so kind to me as you always

were, Leo, dear. There's no one now to help me with my geography and my French exercise, as you used to ; no one cares for me now, and I've been so sad, and so friendless, and so ill ; but I feel better now that I have seen you again, Leo. You won't forget me again, Leo, will you ? Promise me you never will."

"Indeed, Baby, I never will."

And again the thin arms were woven round her neck, and the fevered lips pressed to hers. And after this it seemed how great a pleasure to the poor sick child to interweave her tiny burning fingers tightly with her visitor's, while a smile lit up her wanned features, with yet a wet line of tears upon her sunken cheeks !

"How long have you been ill, my poor Baby?"

"For two weeks I think, dear. I know I have been up here two Sundays, for I heard the bells ringing and the girls getting ready for church. But oh, the time has seemed so long, Leo, so dreadfully long, and I have felt so sick and lonely ! I tried hard not to cry, because I knew it was wrong of me, and babyish, and that I am growing a great girl now—and that you wouldn't like me to be crying for

so little, would you, Leo? But the tears would come, and even now I can't help crying, though I don't know why quite—for I'm very very glad to see you again, Leo. But oh, it was dreadful before you came!"

"I'm sure, Miss Gill, there's been no cause for your crying. Haven't you had a nice room all to yourself—why, if you'd been a parlour-boarder you couldn't have had more. Here you've been, surrounded with every comfort, and haven't I been for ever and ever coming up to see you, and bringing you your salts, and your gruel, and what-not, all regular and comfortable, and sitting with you asking you your catechism, or hearing you your hymns—for nobody's ever too ill to attend to their religious duties, you know—nobody; I'm sure it's very very wrong and wicked, and ungrateful of you, to be making complaints like this against those as have been wearing themselves out with benefiting you. How can you, Miss?"

So Booth interrupted—the child sinking back with a shudder at the sound of her harsh, coarse voice.

"That will do, Booth," said Leonora, calmly turning to her. "There is no occasion for your

remaining here longer. You will leave the room, if you please. I know the way down."

Booth looked very much as though she meditated resistance. Her fierce brows came down lowering over her dull black eyes, and her head rocked much after Miss Dorothea's manner. The superior servant paused for a moment as though searching for a weak place in the enemy's lines. Certainly she found none. She wheeled round and rigidly left the room.

"One thing," she said outside, "standing here, I can make out all they say; if that little slut says more than she ought, why, I'll let her know, that's all."

"Oh, Leo, how brave you are, to talk to her like that; ain't you afraid of her? She frightens me so, and she is so cruel and cross; and she says such dreadful things to me sometimes. Tell me, Leo, do you think I shall die?"

"What, *you*, Baby, so young? What can put such fancies into your head? No, dear, you'll soon be well and strong and yourself again. Why shouldn't you?"

"I don't know, but *she* says that very likely I shall die—that years ago a pupil died here, in this very room, Leo, and she was younger than

I am, and had hair just of my colour, and she says that most likely I shall go too, just as the other young lady did."

"It's very wrong and wicked of her, Baby, and you mustn't believe a word of what she says, and she's a cruel, bad woman to speak to you of such things."

(Outside the door a superior servant's arm was moving menacingly.)

"And tell me, Leo, if I die, do you think it's true as she says, that evil spirits will torture me for ever and ever? Tell me, Leo; only—only don't say it's true."

And the childish eyes, wide open, gazed piteously, appealingly, into her friend's face, and Leo felt herself locked ever so tightly in the wasted arms.

"No, no, my darling Baby," cried Leo, fervidly. "It's not true, it's not true. Don't think of such things, Baby;" and then she murmured,—“Oh, how shameful!”

"The hussy! the heathen!" groaned Booth without.

"Oh, Leo, it makes me so glad to hear you say so. I'm sure that what you say is right, and true. I can believe every word that you say, Leo. I'll

try not to be frightened any more. I'll try to forget what *she* said. I'm sure what you say is right."

She looked quite happy in her new faith, putting her whole heart in her belief, as children will do. Who does not envy them the power of doing so?

"It's like what Jenny used to tell me, long—long—oh, ever so long ago."

"Who's Jenny, dear?"

"Jenny was my sister, long ago, in India, when I was quite a little thing, before I came to England—before they sent me here to learn my lessons—but I can remember it quite well. Jenny always told me that when we died we should be more happy than we had ever been; and we should go to join mamma, who died when I was a baby, and who is an angel now in heaven; and she'd be so glad to see us; and we should all be so happy together. Won't that be so, Leo?"

"Yes, Baby, you'll go to join mamma, but not yet. You'll grow to be a woman, yet, as tall as I am—taller, perhaps" (and a smile flitted along the curves of her lips). "But where is Jenny, now?"

"I don't know," said the child, with a sad,

bewildered look. "Perhaps Jenny's gone to mamma, without waiting for me. Yet Jenny was very fond of me, and used to nurse me, and kiss me, and romp with me, always. Yes—Jenny and papa; but that's so long ago, now—oh, so long ago. Perhaps they've forgotten all about me now. Yet I don't think Jenny would do that," the child added, meditatively.

"And have you no other friends, Baby, that you can remember?"

"No. I don't think I can remember any more."

"No friends in England? Did no one ever come to see you here?"

"No. Oh, yes—once. The captain of the ship who brought me over. He came once. I used to call him 'uncle,' and he used to make me laugh so; but he never came again."

Some further talk did Leo have with her little friend. Then—

"And now, Baby, I'm afraid I must leave you."

"Must you, Leo! Oh, don't go yet. Five minutes more, Leo. Please, only five minutes. And you'll come again, won't you, Leo?"

"Yes. I'll come again. I'll be sure to—very, very soon."

"You won't forget, Leo! Oh, don't forget. I shall be so, so sad if you forget."

Leo answered with a kiss.

"And you'll be a good, brave girl, and you won't get frightened again, whatever they may say or do. And then, if I can—and I think I can—I'll come very soon, and take you with me. You'll be glad to come with me, won't you, Baby? And we will be so happy together, and we'll go down in the country, and make you quite well again; and we'll have such fun; and you shall ride on my white pony, think of that! and try and be brave, and get well as soon as ever you can. Good-by, dearest!"

"Good-by, Leo. Kiss me once more. Be sure you don't forget me. Once more. Good-by."

"Your ma, Miss," said Booth, outside, "has sent in to say she's tired of waiting, and hopes you'll be ready to return to town."

"You must take great care of little Miss Gill, Booth," Leo said, in her sweetest accents, not heeding the message, malignantly delivered—"great care, if only for my sake."

There was a sound as of a chinking of money.

"What's money!" Booth was muttering, as she

followed Leo's silken skirts down the staircase. "What's money, I should like to know, but dross, and filth, and rubbish?"

It was noticeable, however, that she was found shortly afterwards putting away carefully certain coins in a green purse as long as a stocking, decked with sharp steel rings and tassels.

"I have seen Miss Gill," Leo remarked to Miss Bigg, nervously grating her mittens together at the foot of the stairs. "I am distressed at her state. I remember what I said concerning her. Do you remember it, too. I shall send down the best medical assistance that can be procured in London. Meanwhile, you will write to me, if you please, daily, how she is going on. You will send me, also, a note of what is due to you on her account, and I will be careful to speak to papa upon the subject. Pray don't let me have cause to complain of any negligence as to these matters. Good morning, Miss Bigg."

The little lady graciously entrusted for a moment two of her fingers to be scratched by Miss Bigg's mittens, and then rustled into the barouche at the door of Chapone House.

"Drive quickly, Andrews. Home, of course," said Mrs. Carr. "Dear me, Leonora, what a long

time you have been, you've made me get quite tired and sleepy, and cramped sitting here by myself. I'm afraid we shall be late for dinner, and you know your father hates unpunctuality, especially at dinner. Men are all alike in that respect. Jordan was very angry when he was kept waiting for his meals. I remember on one occasion he left the house because the dinner was rather behind-hand, and declared he would dine off cold meat at a tavern, sooner than wait any longer. I was very much annoyed at the time, I remember. What, that little Miss Gill unwell, is she? I'm sure I'm very sorry—why do you call her Baby? Why, she must be nine or ten years old, I should think. Oh, because her name's Barbara; a foolish name, I think. Yes, I remember her very well. You brought her down to Croxall one Christmas—or was it Midsummer—oh, both was it? A pretty little thing, well mannered, but timid, with red hair, hadn't she—oh, flaxen was it? Jordan's hair was a bright auburn—a beautiful colour. He was not like you, Nora—not much—just a little about the mouth perhaps, and he had the same way that you have of putting up your chin sometimes. He was a good deal like Arnold

in features, only not quite so tall, not with his boots off. *Of course*, the child must have medical advice, the very best, certainly. Very ill, is she? Dear me; poor little thing—poor little soul! Why, my dear, you've got tears in your eyes—don't cry about it, she'll get well again; of course she will. The illnesses I nursed you through when you were a child! But you were always very good when you were ill—very quiet and patient. Jordan was not; he was cross and obstinate, and wouldn't keep in bed, or take his physic. But then he had such a high spirit, and men are always impatient, and lose their temper when they're ill; they can't help it. I always thought that Miss Bigg was very mean. I said she was a screw the first time I ever saw her. I was always afraid that she wouldn't give you enough to eat. It's very wicked not to give children enough to eat. I never liked the woman from the first, although she was very highly recommended to me. Indeed, I was opposed to your going to her school, only your father insisted; he laid so much stress upon the importance of your associating with young people of your own age, lest you should grow up odd and old-fashioned, and conceited and spoiled. I

wanted him to educate both you and Jordan at home, but he wouldn't. He was very firm about it—almost angry at last, so I gave way. I never opposed his wishes beyond a certain point; it was not often that he was so obstinate. So Jordan went to Eton, and you to Miss Bigg. The elder sister was living then; she was a superior woman to this one in every respect; she had a better manner, and was really clever, I believe. No, the poor child mustn't be left in that way; of course, it's hard upon Miss Bigg, but she ought to do her duty for all that. She'll be paid in time, I suppose, unless the child's relations are all dead. Whole families die off very suddenly sometimes. I read in the paper the other day of twelve people being poisoned by eating horseradish. I never touch it myself on that account, and, besides, I don't like it. Yes, my dear, I'll make a point of speaking to your father about it this very evening, after he's had his nap; he's generally in the mood to listen and do what I ask him then. And I'll send round to Sir Cupper Leech the first thing in the morning, to beg that he will go at once down to Kew, and look at the poor child, and prescribe for her, and we'll take her away from Miss Bigg

at the very earliest opportunity. Dear me, what a bad habit Andrews has of pulling up suddenly ; he always startles me, and I'm sure he'll take the wheel off against that lamp-post some day. I must speak to your father about it. Only five minutes, my dear, to dress for dinner, don't be longer. I'm sure that silk will do very well. Your father's fond of that dress, it's one of the best that Miss Bradshaw ever made for you." &c. &c.

It is not to be supposed that good old Mrs. Carr delivered the above sentences in the form of a continuous and set speech. Her remarks were made from time to time during the drive from Kew Green back to Westbourne Terrace, and were interspersed with other observations, not of sufficient importance to be preserved, with interruptions from Miss Leonora Carr, in the shape of comments and questions, and, above all, the recital of the illness and sad state of Baby Gill. For convenience' sake only have we welded into one paragraph the gist of the conversation in the barouche, omitting the share of the younger lady.

But Sir Cupper Leech had left London. He

was enjoying a physician's holiday. He had stopped at Mayence on a Rhine trip, to test thoroughly the effects of his favourite Steinwein on the Britannic constitution. He was personally occupied in experiments upon this subject. He had some notion of recommending the wine (in pints at luncheon) as an admirable "dirigent, and corrigent, and tonic:" it seemed to him likely to become a fashionable medicine with his aristocratic patients.

Sir Cupper Leech would not return for three weeks or a month. So said his servant (in a handsome livery, a senna-coloured coat, with Turkey rhubarb plushes). But a physician round the corner in Mount Street was attending to Sir Cupper's practice for him.

This proved to be Doctor Hawkshaw, senior Physician of St. Lazarus's Hospital, Regius Professor of Phlebotomy and Materia Medica, and author of the celebrated works on "Insanity and Brain Cells," "The Physiology of Fatty Degeneration," "The Pathology of the Stomach," the editor of the new issue of "Pepper on the Kidneys," and other important medical authorities.

Dr. Hawkshaw was very indefatigable. In addition to his own large practice, to his hospital

duties, to his medico-literary labours, he seemed always able to do more ; to attend to the patients, or deliver the lectures, or visit the hospitals of his colleagues. He never left town ; he knew nothing of Steinwein. He was devoted to his profession—his life might be described as one long prescription.

He had been attending a young lady in Coppice Row, on his way to St. Lazarus's Hospital ; but he now said that he should call no more, as she was in a fair way of recovery. He opened Mrs. Carr's note addressed to Sir Cupper, and straightway turned his horses' heads towards Kew.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. LOMAX OF THE WAFER STAMP OFFICE.

THE Honourable Dudley Chalker was in the Highlands. In the north he was the same Dudley Chalker he had been in the south; not different on the elastic heather to that he had been in his spring-seated stall at the opera. Certainly, he was not more conversational: acquired no new power of language. He ejaculated "Aw!" when the Mountain Dew stung his throat and brought the tears from his weak eyes to trickle on to his strong moustache, thatching his upper lip so thickly with far-projecting eaves, like the roof of a *châlet*. And he murmured "Baw!" when the penetrating mist soaked through his clothes and struck cold upon his cuticle. A few weeks and he was to bend his steps to what it had pleased Lord Dolly to designate "the family dungeon in Wales;" in other words, to Granite Castle, the seat in that principality of the Honour-

able Dudley's father, Hugh, ninth Baron Sandstone.

Arnold Page had encountered little Lord Dolly at the Junior Adonis Club, Pall Mall, of which institution both were members.

"We've got old Flukey out," quoth his lordship; "had the doose of a job though. The old boy got quite to like his quarters in that lock-up. Said, 'By Jove!' (you know his way), 'he never was so comfortable in his life before; had the best of everything, none of his duns knew where to find him, while the society was first-rate.' Barney Levy didn't behave so very badly in the matter. We all did it between us somehow. Doosid lucky we didn't delay it. There was a whole host of detainers came down an hour after we'd done the trick. Close shave, wasn't it? All Flukey's fault. He wanted such a lot of persuading to come out. You see, when he *does* take an idea into his head—he don't often, I admit—it's no end of trouble to get it out again. He sticks to it, sir, like glue. Obstinate old beggar! However, it's all right now. The yachting affair's coming off. Ever seen his yacht? Pretty little thing, the *Pewit*. I call her the *Mudlark*. Flukey don't like it much; but he *will* hug the

shore and run her aground so awfully. We're off to-morrow; don't know where to. Clipstone's going. Storkford *was*, but he's been missing these three days, and we don't know where to look for him. If he don't turn up to-night we shall go without him. I think he's hiding to avoid us; he does get so dreadfully ill on these yachting trips. So we all do, for that matter. You're better engaged, I suppose? Lucky dog, with that pretty Miss Carr, eh? By George! who wouldn't stand in your boots if they'd only got a chance? Well, good-by, old man; wish you joy. Oh, it won't be immediately. Good-by. I shall look you up directly I come back."

And Cupid put to sea in the *Pewit*, under the command of his friend, Lord Flukemore. A most perilous voyage, considering that the seamanship of that nobleman was not of first-rate quality, and that he was as likely as not to steer his comrades to the bottom. But Englishmen love risky pleasures; they cannot be always having war and its forlorn hopes; for one reason, the expense is so enormous; still they manage to pursue peril by way of pastime, inventing dangerous *dé-lassements*, less costly, perhaps, but almost as

certain to provide similar chances of a serious issue.

The marble halls and gilded saloons of the Junior Adonis were deserted. The smoking-room had been seized upon by the whitewashers, and was crowded with scaffolding poles, by order of the committee, all out of town. There was hardly any one to read the newspapers save the waiters. The magazines were uncut. The porter of prodigious girth slept throughout the day undisturbed. Buttons kept up a course of healthy exercise, and wore the nap from certain portions of his uniform by perpetual sliding down the banisters. The chief cook was enjoying his vacation at Hombourg. He wore there a frogged frock-coat and was taken for a foreign nobleman *incog.* by more than one travelling stock-exchange Englishman. The charwoman sat alone in the scullery, telling her own fortune; it had not been a very bright one hitherto, for fifty years—but there was to be a change now; she was to marry well, a rich fair gentleman, ride in a coach and six, and have eleven children. So said the dirty cards she always carried in her pocket.

London was very empty. The government

of the country was being carried on by one Minister, in whom nobody placed particular confidence. But somehow he seemed to be quite equal to the occasion; at any rate, there was no one in town to question his competency; perhaps it's easy to govern the country in the autumn. The justice of the nation was being distributed by one judge—a puisne, of course, who sat at chambers for half an hour once a week; it was quite enough. There was very little litigation going on, for one reason, I suppose, because the lawyers were all away enjoying themselves—perhaps, as a consequence, the clients were doing the same.

“Are you going down to Oakmere?” asked Robin Hooper of the gentleman residing with him in Sun-Dial Buildings, Temple.

“Yes, Rob, I'm going. I put it off from day to day,” answered Mr. Arnold Page. “I suppose, because there's something of a duty attached to the thing. They rather bore me at Oakmere in fact; but of course I must go. It's only fit that I should show myself to the tenants, and that sort of thing. I shall go very soon now. Indeed I've just got a letter from my brother-in-law, Lomax, *à propos* of my going. I don't

get on very well with Lomax; but I believe he's a very good fellow, really, and has my interest warmly at heart."

The letter referred to ran thus:—

"Wafer Stamp Office, Whitehall.

"MY DEAR ARNOLD,—I want very much to see you. I was in hopes you would have been down at Oakmere before this. Georgina has had your room ready for the last three weeks. In any case, can you call upon me *here* to-day or to-morrow in the afternoon, before three? I generally leave town for Oakmere by the 3.45 express; but I want to have a little conversation with you upon a matter of business. I'll be sure not to bore you more than I can possibly avoid.

"Your affectionate brother,

"FRANCIS L. CHALKER LOMAX.

"A. Page, Esq., Sun-Dial Buildings."

"Of course I must go and see what he wants," said Arnold, rather moodily. And he went.

There are no distinctions of dress by which we are enabled to detect on the instant the particular grade of a gentleman serving the nation in a Government office. At the bar we have merely to feel the stuff of the advocate's robe to determine

whether he be a leader or a junior, or to look for an apparently sore place on his wig, hidden by a circle of court-plaster, to decide if he be or not a serjeant-at-law. In the army or navy we may ascertain rank by counting buttons, or weighing bullion tags, or measuring scraps of lace, or examining if the shoulders be adorned with epaulettes—gold *swabs*, I think the hero (A. B. Seaman) terms them in nautical melodramas. The field-marshal is known more by his white satin ribbons even than his baton. The rear-admiral must announce his position by bearing his flag at the mizen-top-gallant-masthead, while the vice bears his at the fore-top-gallant, and the full-blown admiral his at the main-top-gallant. The coronets of the nobility proclaim their respective titles. We know that the baron may circle his head with six golden balls or pearls, and no more, while the viscount is limited only in this respect by the circumference of his cranium; that the earl may raise the pearls on eight pyramidal points, with a dainty alternation of strawberry-leaves, while in the number of these leaves is the superiority of the duke over the marquis asserted. But in the Government office who is to decide which is the underling and which is the official of supreme

consequence? There is nothing in the external presentment of the men to aid our selection. The very smartest man I ever knew in my life without exception was Jack Green, of the F. O. The exquisite taste of that man in dress was something marvellous. It would have done honour to a prince of the blood. He was in the choicest society, and he seemed to cast a lustre about any *salon*. He was, of course, conceived to hold an appointment under Government of an extraordinary value and importance. It was in some circles even a moot-point whether he would or not be compelled to go out with the Ministers. I was never surprised at this high appraisal of my friend; he deserved his social successes, all of them, including even the rich wife he ultimately secured. His manners were so distinguished, his cool impudence was so unparalleled, his whiskers were so marvellous, his costume so faultless, while his powers of small talk were quite those of a Cabinet Minister. But all this while—the salary of Jack Green at the F. O. was but one hundred and twenty pounds per annum, and not a farthing more. How he contrived to do all he did upon that not large income—and I have good reason for believing that he possessed no further

property of any kind whatever—is one of those inscrutable mysteries into which men dare not inquire. Though he looked like a Secretary of State, or at least a head of a department, he was in reality quite a junior clerk. Yet, see to what a pinnacle society raised him, owing to its ignorance of official matters, to the lack of distinctive uniforms in the Civil Service, and to Jack Green's own adroitness, and good broadcloth, and fine whiskers, and conversational powers !

It is not, then, evidently to the men themselves that we must look for outward signs determining their official position. We must cast about for other tests, and eventually perhaps we shall decide that the question resolves itself into one of carpets. For so far as I can make out, the height of official ambition is to sit in a room furnished with a Turkey carpet—after that there seems only the Premiership, or perhaps an archbishopric worthy of aspiration. The Turkey carpet is the symbol of undoubted superiority and chieftainship in the Civil Service. There may be minor distinctions touching deal desks and Spanish mahogany furniture; but on the floor the whole business rests. You enter the office at the age of sixteen, say, at a salary of

eighty pounds, subject to certain deductions to provide for your eventual superannuation, and your possible widow, and you copy letters from ten till four in a room, the boards of which are bare, several other young gentlemen of your own standing occupying with you the apartment. You advance in age, your salary increases, you progress through cocoa-nut matting, kamptulicon, and Kidderminster, with pauses more or less prolonged at each of these stages, with fewer and fewer comrades sharing your room as you advance, until at last you reach that great official goal—a separate room, with a Turkey carpet. Beyond this pitch of luxury it does not seem possible to ascend—even in the wildest dreams of the most imaginative of our civil servants; and some of them, I assure you, are gentlemen of extreme gifts in this respect.

Mr. Lomax, of the Wafer Stamp Office, was a Turkey carpet man. In age he was about forty, he might even have been a little more, for he was a carefully dressing man, and carefully dressing men, I find, are always rather older than they seem. A handsome man, with a sharp, thin, aquiline nose, large, light blue eyes, the pupil a mere speck that never dilated or

lent new light or colour to the rather stony-looking irids, and beautifully arched eyebrows—he had a habit of smoothing these out with his little finger perhaps to show his superb diamond ring—it was these, possibly, aided by his small lipless pinched mouth, that gave to his face a certain supercilious expression, which many of his friends accounted very aristocratic. He was tall, slight, stooped a little as he walked, from constant bending over his desk, as he explained. He wore habitually a superfine blue frock-coat with much velvet about the collar; a cravat of a lighter blue, beautifully white linen, his starched wristbands carefully drawn down to his knuckles, his hat glossy as new satin, and his boots brilliantly polished. Winter or summer, he wore light-coloured gloves and carried a neat slim green silk umbrella. He was carefully shaven, only a slight fragment of whisker, the shape of a pine on an Indian shawl, was left on his cheeks; his well-formed chin was decorated with a dimple, and his hair, thinning very much over his white forehead, was yet adroitly arranged, the oiled locks remaining being ingeniously interwoven so as to conceal as much as possible this little deficiency. He had a certain stiffness about the

neck; he never turned his head without turning also his whole body; this perhaps interfered with the abstract grace of his movements, but still it imparted a degree of dignity and importance to his manner. A double eye-glass, gold-rimmed, swung from his neck on a broad ribbon; he had a long sight, which rendered it necessary for him to magnify near objects; he always arranged these glasses, securing them by their spring on the curve of his nose, which possessed what engineers call a heavy gradient, before he commenced to read or write; and the action, simple in itself, yet seemed to invest these ordinary occupations with a ceremonious and impressive character. He was a man who, it was evident, had set a high value upon himself, and somehow it happened in most cases that he succeeded in bringing round to an almost identical opinion everybody with whom he came in contact.

The Wafer Stamp Office was proud of its chief—for he was the head of that important branch of the Inland Revenue. And it must not be imagined that it was an easy thing to gain the good opinion of the Wafer Stamp Office considered collectively, or that its applause

was given upon insufficient grounds. With the exception, perhaps, of the F. O. (in which of course my friend Jack Green, to whom reference has already been made, is included), the Wafer Stamp is probably the best dressed Government office in London. There was an attempt at one time to set the Admiralty, I believe, above it in point of whiskers, but the ill-advised effort was happily not persisted in. Certainly the manners and habits of the Wafer Stamp officers are of the most distinguished character. Nearly every man of them at some time or other in his life has waltzed with a lady of title. They never smoke short pipes even in the seclusion of their own apartments. They never carry halfpence or wear cleaned gloves. Even quite the junior clerks come to the office in Hansom cabs, and appear, after four o'clock, in the Row, calmly and securely seated on the most homicidal-looking horses money can hire. These things may not represent quite the exquisite pitch to which matters are carried at the F. O., but it must be conceded that they approach near it.

It was part of Mr. Lomax's duty to despatch to expostulating members of the community long letters on foolscap, setting forth quite a whirl of

titles of Acts of Parliament, and an array of elaborate and argumentative sentences, to convince the objectors how completely and certainly they were liable to be assessed for Wafer Stamp Duty. He had interviews with the public, or such of them as were persistent in the idea of their non-liability, in his snug Turkey carpeted room at Whitehall. He had two manners, two distinct manners, on the occasions of these interviews. He had his grand, solemn, impressive manner, which was very effective indeed, and almost convincing. He waved his paper-cutter like the leader of a slow movement in a symphony as he sat stiffly on his padded Spanish mahogany writing chair. "I assure you," he would say in solemn accents, "the Commissioners have no desire to put a strained interpretation upon the Act under which they derive their powers. I must really ask you to be cautious how you venture to bring, or even to hint, such a charge against the Commissioners. I really cannot consent to sit in this room and hear you so express yourself. I must counsel you at once to pay the amount levied upon you to your district collector without the delay of another hour, or we shall be compelled, however reluctantly, to in-

struct the Government solicitor to take proceedings. I should warn you also that, under clause 360 of the Act of last session, the Commissioners have power to inflict a fine of treble duty upon the discovery of any attempt at evasion." With a severe glance at his visitor he would ring his handbell with a rigid forefinger. "Good morning. Door, Pawson" (to the porter), "door; show this gentleman out." And he had his affable, almost jocose, manner. He would stand in front of his fire, with a straddling action of his legs, kicking out his feet now and then from sheer animal spirits and playfulness (like a young horse turned into a meadow), or as though inflicting punishment upon an imaginary foe. "Not liable, my dear sir, not liable; ha! ha! a good joke: of course you're liable. We're all liable. I'm liable. I'd get off if I could, but I can't. Pay it, my dear sir; pay it at once, without further to-do, you'll find it the cheapest in the end. We're terrible fellows here, I can tell you; if we once make an assessment we stick to you—never lose sight of you; and, if you give us any trouble, by George, sir, we let the Attorney-General and the Lord Chancellor, and all the law officers

of the Crown, loose upon you like a pack of hounds. You'll give in *then*. Ha! ha! Take my advice. Give in *now*. Pay it; pay it." And somehow the tax generally was paid. It was hard to say which of Lomax's manners was the most successful.

Certainly it was difficult to resist the charm of his plausibility, of his readiness, of his calm concise way of putting things. His voice firm, yet musical; his articulation very distinct; his smile winning, showing just a flash now and then of his small white teeth; and then the convincing action of his delicate hands waving from his faultless wristbands, the diamond glittering as they sawed the air. He was handsome, aristocratic, clever, and standing on his official Turkey carpet, he had greatly the advantage of his opponent. He had been the younger son of a family, well connected, but not rich. His mother was a Chalker. He had married well; Arnold's sister Georgina, the only daughter of the late General Page, of Oakmere Court, Woodlandshire: not quite so well, perhaps, as he had expected, for the bulk of the general's property, including the land, had gone to his son. But still this was all a long time ago now; the sister was

some years older than the brother; children had blessed the marriage; his wife was a clever and accomplished, and had been a very beautiful, woman. The husband had little reason to complain; and he had reached the Turkey carpet stage of official prosperity.

Arnold was ushered by Pawson into the Turkey carpeted room.

“ Ah, my dear Arnold, how are you? Glad to see you, my dear boy,” cried Mr. Lomax, cheerily (he adopted his jocose manner generally with his brother-in-law, treating him rather paternally and patronizingly, viewing him as a young and inexperienced, and not very gifted, stripling). “ How goes on the Temple and our law studies. You’re not too assiduous, I’m afraid. Ha! ha! Well, well, we mustn’t be too severe upon the young. Perhaps, at your age, I was fonder of play than of work. It’s different now—perhaps I can’t help myself. Sit down. Pawson, place a chair. Put Mr. Page’s hat on the side-table. I’ll ring when I want you. Excuse me, while I sign these few letters. There’s *The Times* close to you.” (Reads) “ ‘ Sir,—I have the honour to inform you that the Commisioners ——’ Dear, dear! Commisioners with one s again. How very careless these

young fellows are. Hum—hum—hum. Well, I suppose that will do. You see, Arnold, people *will* object to pay their taxes. Very foolish, isn't it. Yes; of course it is; because they have to pay in the end. Ha! ha! Treble duty, sometimes, for trying to evade. Hope you don't intend to make any default. I shall show you no mercy, I assure you. I shall send a broker into the Temple, and seize upon all those pretty pictures you have got there. Ha! ha! Here, Pawson, I've signed these letters. Ask Mr. Fitz-Elliott if there's anything more he wants of me? No! Very well, then. Now, Arnold, we've got half an hour to ourselves. I go by the 3.45. Very convenient the Waterloo Station, isn't it?"

"Have you anything particular to tell me?" asked Arnold.

"One or two things; not *very* particular, my dear boy, but I wanted to hear your opinion. By the way, Georgina's very angry that you haven't been down to see her for so long a time. You'll have enough to do to make your peace with her when you *do* go, I can promise you. But, as I tell her, the town offers so many attractions to a young man, and it is dull at Oakmere—really dull; and then I know the thought of

business to be done there has kept you away, I know it as well as possible. You've been frightening yourself with the notion of accounts to be examined, and lists looked into, and new leases to be signed, and interviews with the tenants, and all that sort of thing. Ha! ha! I've done what I could to spare you that. Altogether I don't wonder that you hesitate to quit that snug place of yours in the Temple, where you have every comfort round you, and all your friends and associates at hand, for of course at your time of life it's with the men of your own standing that you want to associate, not with families and fogies—like me, for instance. Yes; for I'm growing a foggy, Arnold. Ha! ha! positively a foggy. Well, well, but you must come soon, if it's only to see the great improvements I've been making about the house and grounds. I've thrown out a conservatory in front of the drawing-room window. Georgina keeps her plants there, and her birds, with a fountain in the middle. You can't conceive how very pretty in effect this is. Then I've made a new terrace walk on the left side of the Italian garden. I've rebuilt the pinery, and now I'm throwing out a new wing on the west side of the house. It

will be very comfortable in winter ; capital parlour and billiard-room, with a charming boudoir above for Georgina ; the one on the other side was so terribly cold, and so confined. I'm quite sure," added Mr. Lomax, perhaps in answer to a peculiar expression in the face of his brother-in-law, "I'm quite sure I shall have your hearty approval of all I've done. Of course, these alterations have cost money—that I needn't say ; but still I'm sure you'll like them."

"I hope so," said Arnold, rather seriously, "but I have an objection to the old place being pulled about. It always seemed to me to be very complete and comfortable, either for winter or summer ; however, perhaps it is my own fault for not being down there oftener than I have been. I had no idea when you spoke of making a few changes, that you had such extensive plans in contemplation."

"My dear fellow, you'll be delighted with them, take my word for it. Georgina has supervised the whole business. She has exerted herself to quite a surprising extent, and you know what exquisite taste she has in things of this kind—really exquisite."

Arnold did not look so satisfied on this head

as the husband of the lady. (But then we know how brothers underrate their sisters.)

“Was it to tell me this you wanted to see me?” asked Arnold.

“No, my dear boy, only in part. You’ve really great natural talent for business, Arnold, if you would only do yourself justice; that remark shows it—that desire to go at once straight to the gist of a matter. Quite right and proper; I applaud you for it. I really do. It’s an age of periphrasis, beating about the bush—circumlocution, as people say, laughing at our office manners, and it’s very true—very true, indeed. No; what I wanted to say to you was this: I’ll put the matter into as few words as possible, for I know *you* don’t want to be detained any longer than can be avoided, and I know that *I* want to catch the 3.45 to Oakmere. Ha! ha! well! then, look here. The Oakmere property was yours, under your father’s will—subject to an annual charge of no great amount in favour of your sister, Georgina, for her life. Now has it ever struck you that the property has been greatly over-valued? No, I daresay not. But I’ve been looking into the matter. Your father always regarded it as representing a certain in-

come of so much, and he lived up to that amount. You have followed in his footsteps. I can't blame you for so doing. Your expenses have been less than his, still they have been heavy, and the plain fact of the matter is, that you have both been living at a rate in excess of the income arising from the property."

"Is this so?" inquired Arnold, with an air of surprise.

"It is indeed. I have been at some pains to go into the matter. Now, as you must be aware, this state of things cannot go on for long without you're feeling the shoe pinch you."

"I had no conception of this."

"Nor had I. Still there is no cause of alarm. The fact is—the plain fact is, that the property has been badly handled—very badly handled; there has been great neglect; there has been a want of supervision. The tenants have had too much their own way, and the estate has deteriorated dreadfully, I must say, since it came into your father's hands, and entirely owing to a bad system of management. No doubt, too, your father was imposed upon by the people about him. He was a man, perhaps rather likely to be imposed upon. He was so frank and true and generous himself,

that he was very slow to believe ill of any one. In many points, Arnold, you resemble him remarkably."

"But the remedy?"

"Well, is simple enough—a different system, some retrenchment, a less draught upon the income of the estate, and, what is very important, a liberal expenditure upon the property in the way of improvements. We've fallen behind the age, in fact. We have to deal with land now, as with everything else, upon a very different system to that formerly prevailing. The thing is very clear, only people were some time before they found it out. Improve your property, and you improve your rental. The more money you spend upon your land, the more money over and over again your land will return to you."

Arnold rose and walked about the room rather disturbed in manner.

"I am afraid," he said, "I have to reproach myself with much neglect. I ought to have seen to all this before; it ought not to have been left to you to make these discoveries; but somehow I've fallen into a habit of taking things too much for granted.

“Come, come—you mustn’t take a too serious view of the thing; there’s nothing to be alarmed about, or to grieve over. It was only likely, that when with my steady business notions—ha! ha! you must give some credit to official habits, Arnold—that when I came to look into the matter I should lay my hand upon one or two little defects and shortcomings like this.”

“But what would you have me do now, Lomax?”

“I’ll tell you, very briefly, for the time’s running on” (he glanced at his handsome gold watch). “I’ll tell you how to improve your property, and without present loss of income, for no man likes retrenchment; I know that very well. We talk of it as an easy thing, but it’s really doosid difficult. I ought to know; I’ve tried it often enough. Ha! ha! Well, look here: in the first place, we must raise money upon mortgage of the Oakmere property.”

“Mortgage! Do you remember how my father used to speak of mortgages?”

“Yes, yes, my dear boy, I remember; he had old-fashioned ideas upon the subject, and circumstances are really so different to what they used to be. And you will not really

be borrowing money, you will be investing it. Now, look here. Say we borrow a sum of fifty thousand upon the estate—at five per cent. We might even get it at four and a half; there are always people who will only lend money upon land—timid investors, say, or trustees who are bound to invest their trust funds upon real or government securities. You can always borrow upon land in that way, and at a comparatively low rate of interest. Well, say we raise fifty thousand upon mortgage of the estate?”

“But wouldn’t it do as well,” Arnold interrupted, “to borrow of my banker, upon a deposit of the title deeds?”

Mr. Lomax looked curiously at his brother-in-law for a moment.

“Yes,” he said, after a pause, “certainly, that course is open to you. It is quite a matter of opinion. I see myself many objections to borrowing money of a banker in that way. You let him too much into the secrets of the prison-house. One doesn’t want one’s banker to know everything. And it’s a mortgage after all; if *that’s* what you’re fighting against, it’s an equitable mortgage, as you very well know. Besides,

suppose he calls in his money, you must go elsewhere for a loan then, and there's—at least I think so—a sense of obligation about borrowing of one's banker—to any important amount. I should say at once go to a third party for the money; an Insurance Office, or public company with money to lend, for instance. There's the Ostrich now. I happen to know that the Ostrich would be glad to lend a large sum in this way."

"Well, pardon my interruption; continue, please."

"Well, we raise this money—never mind how at present, we raise it—fifty thousand, say."

"Isn't that a very large sum—more than is necessary?"

"You see the expense is much the same; the examination into title and preparation of deeds much the same, whether you raise five thousand or fifty. But I will show you why I name a large sum. You sink half, say, in the improvement of your property—of course you cannot look for immediate return from *that*; the rest you re-invest. How? In a way which will bring you sufficient to keep down the interest of the mortgage, and yet leave you a balance of income even above that you are at present enjoying. Invest

in railway, mining, insurance companies; I can put you in the way of securing most admirable investments in things of that kind."

"But won't that be speculating?"

"My dear Arnold! You don't call buying Bank stock speculating, do you—because its price varies with the condition of the market? Well, these things I have mentioned are just as safe as Bank stock, though of course they are liable in the same way to fluctuation in value. Now, from peculiar circumstances, I happen to know of some very admirable investments—investments beyond the reach of the general public; for of course there's always a public greedy enough and grasping enough after such things. But, in fact, these investments don't come into the market; they're kept well out of the market by persons well informed in the matter, who know the reason why, and all about it." (He unlocked a drawer in his desk, and took out a bundle of papers, which he turned over as he spoke.) "Here are some shares now to be had in the Ostrich Insurance Company—a really splendid thing—safe to pay twelve per cent., and indeed I see no reason why it shouldn't pay twenty, or even five-and-twenty. Then there's this new Mining Com-

pany,—the Dom Ferdinando El Rey Silver Mining Company, at Tezcotzinco, a most superb thing. It's close to the Dom Bobadillo, which has paid its shareholders very nearly ninety per cent.; the income accruing upon its shares, ten pounds paid up only, is something enormous. Then there's the Cape Comorin, Hyderabad and Delhi direct Railway, with an imperial guarantee of six per cent., and the positive certainty of a return of fifteen per cent. from passenger traffic alone in the course of a very short time. You know, these things—it's all very well to talk about speculation—but these things are as good as gold, as safe as the Bank of England."

"But do I understand you to say that I can obtain shares in these undertakings without having to pay enormous premiums?"

"You can have them almost at par—almost at par—owing—owing to a remarkable train of circumstances—a recurrence of which is hardly possible."

Arnold, wondering, looked at his brother-in-law. Mr. Lomax seemed a little nervous and fidgety as his white hands collected the papers and thrust them into the drawer again, turning the key upon them. He walked to the window.

Some men, if they have an important communication to make, like always to have their backs to the light, their faces in shadow. Perhaps Mr. Lomax was of this way of thinking.

“I may say at once plainly and openly—I really don’t see why one shouldn’t be perfectly frank about what—after all, is simply a matter of business—I may say at once then, that I can procure you shares in these remarkable investments, the profits accruing from which I consider to be absolutely certain. In fact, the shares which I propose should be transferred to your name, stand at present in mine. And in this way. You may remember, that I was left guardian of my poor brother George’s children. George had married well, you know—a daughter of Strongbow, the great boiler-maker—so under his will I found myself trustee, for the benefit of my nieces, of a very considerable amount of funded property. The land went to his eldest son. Well, I considered myself bound to do the best I could for the benefit of the orphans. I was the surviving trustee, the money stood in my name. I thought they ought to get a better return than the Bank would give them; I sold out; I re-invested the money in these securities,

and others of a similar kind. Well, the eldest girl is, as you know, grown up now. She is engaged to be married to young Lord Mardale. Her share of the money left by her father will have to be transferred into the names of the trustees of her marriage settlement. Well, it seems that, strictly speaking, I had no right, in spite of the evident advantages of the change—and the great increase of income to be derived from it—I had no right to invest the money in other than government or real securities—and I am bound therefore to reinstate the sum of money, precisely as it stood originally invested; and you will perceive that I am in fact upon the horns of a dilemma, when I inform you that I am under a pledge—a distinct pledge unfortunately—I cannot think now how I could have been so foolish as to have tied my hands in such a way—a pledge not to bring these securities into the market, because a forced sale, in this way, might give rise to alarming reports, and produce, indeed, disastrous consequences.”

“Notwithstanding the eligibility of the undertaking?”

“Notwithstanding even that. You will see, then, that I occupy a situation of some little diffi-

culty. On the one hand, I am bound to buy into the funds; on the other, I am forbidden to sell out my railway and other securities. I must own that I have laid myself open to a charge of indiscretion."

"What's called a breach of trust, in fact."

"Well, yes; something of that kind; though you will understand that I have been acting—if a little irregularly—still purely with a view to the benefit of my wards. You will see, too, that quite apart even from your own interests—for I desire to put the thing fairly before you—it is a matter of convenience to me to find a private purchaser of these shares."

"Couldn't you take them yourself?"

"No; all my available funds are tied up in a way that I dare not disturb."

Arnold hesitated.

"Let me see. Your eldest niece—why, that must be Caroline—wasn't that the girl you proposed to me that I should marry?"

"Well; yes. I think I did say something about it once. She's a very charming girl, and very accomplished. I'm sure a very desirable woman for any man to marry."

"And I suppose if I had married her, the ques-

tion about the change of investments wouldn't have arisen."

Mr. Lomax looked suspiciously out of his light blue eyes. Had he admitted too much? He quite blushed; and his white hands shook. He made a dash at his jocose manner, and gained it—very nearly.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, with some effort. "Well; if my brother-in-law had married my niece, you see that in the complication of relationship that would have arisen, perhaps we should have forgotten these little *nuances* of strict right and wrong in the matter of trusteeship. However, that's all over. You're to marry our friend Carr's daughter. Caroline must console herself as well as she can, ha! ha! with Lord Mardale, and the money will be reinstated—invested in the name of their trustees in the funds, or in what securities they please. I shall have washed my hands of it—and these shares, most desirable things, I must say—I only wish I could afford to keep them myself—will stand in future in the name of Arnold Page, Esq., of the Temple, London, and Oakmere Court, Woodlandshire, eh?"

"Well," said Arnold, slowly, "you see it's a question one can't decide upon on the instant."

“Very true; at the same time you must remember on the other hand, that the matter cannot be left open very long. You must turn it over in your mind. I should be sorry to influence you either one way or the other—of course, if you don’t take the shares some one else will; at the same time I do think it would be a pity, a great pity, if you were to miss so excellent an opportunity of retrieving your position, and at the same time of improving your estate.”

“But there will be calls upon these shares, I suppose?”

“Well, yes. No doubt, as time goes on, there will be calls on the shares. What, then? You’ll be able to meet them. They’ll give full notice, and you’ll be always able to provide the money. Besides, upon your marriage with Miss Carr, there can be no doubt that our friend and neighbour will put you in possession of a very handsome amount, in ready money, paid down on the nail, as people say.”

“Do you think he would like his daughter’s money to be applied in such a way?”

“How could he object? How could he prevent it? I mean that he could have no possible objection. The advantages of these investments

must be patent to every one. Besides, there's another view I should like you to take of this matter. What do you propose to do with yourself in the future? What career do you think of adopting? You have many elegant and delightful pursuits at present: literature, music, the fine arts, and so on. Very charming, indeed. But these are simply pastimes, after all; you must aspire to something beyond these. Of course, you've a very good chance of sitting for Woodlandshire some day. Why not try to qualify yourself for a public and parliamentary life? Say, you take these shares; you acquire an interest in business undertakings of very considerable importance. What is there to hinder you with your influence and position from stepping into the Direction, having a voice in the management of these concerns? I should really like to see you with a little more ambition, Arnold. You don't do yourself justice; you don't, indeed. You have remarkable intelligence, great natural talent; you might really distinguish yourself in the conduct of affairs of this kind. I have not the least doubt the Ostrich would be glad to have you on its Board. I am quite sure that the directors of the Dom Ferdinando

would see you among them with a great deal of pleasure. Of course my position here as a servant of the Government forbids my dreaming of anything of this kind. But there is nothing to prevent *you*. You would find a directorship after all would take up little enough of your time, while it would be, in a way, educating you for a future share in the carrying on of public affairs. Believe me, you should think twice before you fling away an opportunity of this really valuable kind. Seriously, I must say that your present system of life—so far, of course, as I am able to judge—seems to me of a sadly and dangerously lotos-eating character. You will fall into lethargic habits of mind, from which you will find it very difficult to rouse yourself.”

“There’s truth in what you say,” said Arnold, musingly.

“Of course there is, my dear boy; indolence grows on men terribly. Go on like this, and you’ll be a fat man before you are five-and-thirty! Ha! ha! one thing, hard work preserves one’s figure. Ha! ha! by George”—(the watch again)—“I’ve missed the train! what *will* Georgina say! Well, well, it can’t be helped! I must dine in town,

that's all, and you must dine with me, Arnold, you must indeed. We've got a new cook at the Mausoleum. Frangipani his name is. Let me see, you belong to the Junior Adonis—Ah! that's a little too fast for me; I find the Mausoleum very quiet and comfortable. We'll take a turn in the park first, though I suppose there's hardly a soul left there now. Pawson, I'm going."

They dined at the Mausoleum accordingly—the Burgundy was excellent.

"What would old Mr. Carr say to my becoming a director of a public company, I wonder!" Arnold asked himself, as he returned to the Temple.

"If he knew that the title deeds were already pledged!" muttered Mr. Lomax, as he took his seat in a late train to Oakmere.

He was well known on the line; the railway servants saluted him with effusion.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. SIMMONS'S LODGER.

THE notification to the effect that apartments were to be let furnished, and that inquiry concerning them was to be made within, which, as we have shown, had whilom been wafered to the window of a newsvender's shop in Coppice Row, Clerkenwell, was now withdrawn. Mrs. Simmons had secured her full complement of lodgers. The young lady who had been for a few days a patient in the hands of Dr. Hawkshaw, of St. Lazarus Hospital, and a cause of much anxiety to Mr. Robin Hooper and (but in a less degree, by reason of the distractions of his medical and musical studies) to his friend, Mr. Phelps Gossett, had become tenant of the vacant rooms, and there was a disposition to agree upon the whole that she was what was called "a desirable lodger." The peculiar circumstances, however, attending her first introduction to the house, though remem-

bered less vividly, were by no means forgotten. Certain mysteries still obscured the motives of much of her conduct, and, of course, there were not wanting in Coppice Row and its vicinage commentators upon these. Coppice Row had never been disinclined to discuss the doings of its friends and acquaintances. The guests, residents for the most part in Clerkenwell, who assembled nightly in the parlour of the "Spotted Dog," and had constituted themselves into a sort of Amateur Committee of Public Safety, keeping a strict and jealous eye upon both the interests of Europe and the privileges of their own immediate parish, and for whose watchfulness no occurrence at home or abroad was either too magnificent or too minute; the conclave at the "Spotted Dog" had had in due course this subject before them for consideration. "Brother" Simmons—for the members of the assembly bestowed upon each other that prefix, probably from some confused association of their proceedings with the formulæ of courts of law and Masonic lodges (otherwise, they were fond of maintaining a parliamentary tone, though in *that* was traceable at times a decided and undisguisable tap-room fervour)—Brother Simmons

had been invited to inform his colleagues fully upon the topic before them. In the peculiar phraseology of the assembly in such cases, he was desired "to contribute to the harmony of the evening," by stating all he knew relative to his wife's lodger. This "harmony of the evening," indeed, seemed to be quite the motto and watch-word of the meeting—stress was constantly laid upon it as upon a most precious palladium—just as the words "trial by jury," say, or "civil and religious liberty," are recognized among more important communities as representing institutions pregnant with value. Brother Simmons had responded to that toast (for so, curiously enough, he proceeded to describe the invitation), in an address of considerable length and inconsiderable intelligence. But, in plain truth, Brother Simmons could not give information to the meeting, for the simple reason that he had no information to give. He knew nothing whatever concerning his wife's lodger. The matter was out of his department. And he was the less likely to obtain knowledge on the subject, from the fact that his attendance at the "Spotted Dog" meeting was in direct opposition to the injunctions of his wife. A severe reprimand awaited the return

of the newsvender and ex-harlequin to his own fireside. Mrs. Simmons seldom spared her husband. She had found by experience that a merciful or sentimental policy in regard to him was an error that recoiled seriously upon herself. And, after all, there was little enough to be told even by Mrs. Simmons as to the lodger. Dr. Hawkshaw had drawn from her the confession that her name was Milne—Janet Milne. “She’s a lady, *that* I know,” said Mrs. Simmons, “and the baby’s as good as gold in her arms. And the way she takes it from that girl Nancy is quite a picture. A lady every inch of her.” Mrs. Simmons was satisfied, then, to ask few questions concerning the new comer. Perhaps her professional duties had begotten in her a certain respect and liking for a mystery. How many melodramas at the Paroquet had hinged upon an awful secret? She looked forward very likely to revelation at the proper time, when the band would have its cue for the appropriate music and the green curtain would loosen in the flies ready to descend and close the drama. She could wait till then.

Miss Milne had entered upon the occupation of the vacant rooms. Her stock of money was

slender, as Mrs. Simmons had ascertained when she examined the contents of her lodger's pocket. But the charges in the Coppice Row Establishment were not high, and Mrs. Simmons had every confidence, as she stated, in the integrity of the new comer. True; she had no luggage, and expenditure had been inevitable to procure certain wardrobe necessities. But even then a balance had been left. The purchases had been of the most moderate kind. And the way in which she took the baby from Nancy! with such a delightful regard for the safety of its back! After that there was no fear that Mrs. Simmons should press harshly for the settlement of her little account for board and lodging.

“A perfect lady,” quoth the actress. “I’m sure it’s quite a treat to talk with her, after the people one does meet, and the things one has to put up with, and Simmons conducting himself like the monster he is. It’s a comfort to have her in the house. And the baby—bless it!—taking to her ever so kindly. I can leave the house with twice the confidence now, without fidgeting myself, as over and over again I have done, with the notion that Nancy has let it fall and bruised its precious head; or that Amelia’s been drinking

out of the boiling kettle, or set fire to herself; or that little Jemmy's been breaking every window in the place, or put his sister's eyes out with his peg-top. And to think of her helping me to turn my old green silk, ironing it out with her own white hands, and making it up again for me. Why, it looks for all the world as good as new; and I'm sure it never fitted me half so well before as it does now. And all done so nicely and simply, without any fuss or bother, or making me feel that she was conferring an obligation, or a favour, or anything of that sort. Poor thing! so young and so pretty, with such gentle ways about her, and such a sweet soft voice. Yet she must have seen some trouble too, or she'd never look so sad; and she's very delicate—one can see that at once: so pale, and slight, and starting at every noise, even when the door opens suddenly—as timid as a hare. Wants to be a governess, she says, though she has never given lessons before. Well, I'm sure she'd be a treasure to any family—the best in the land. And such a nice way as she's got with children, managing them so nicely, without any noise, and the poor things getting so fond of her too. Why, there's little Jemmy, who can't bear his lessons as a rule, and runs from

his spelling-book like a mad dog from water—why, the child will stand by her side all the morning while she teaches him the French for this, that, and the other; opens his eyes as wide as may be, and gets it all off by heart quite wonderfully. It's the way she has of teaching—that's what it is; and I'm sure it's a first-rate thing for little Jemmy. I know I wish I knew French. Many's the pound a person may make by their knowledge of it. Why, there's young Mobbs, the prompter's son, a mere boy though he *is* married, and his wife, a sweet-tempered young thing, engaged in the ladies' dressing-room at the theatre, and put to bed with twins only last Midsummer,—poor lamb! she never had any talent for the stage, for she's a bad stammer, and her figure's not good, and you must have *that* to succeed at the theatre,—well, young Mobbs is a very clever Frenchman, I'm told; and has constant employment to translate for the theatre. He's as good as a regular engagement to translate from the French; sends in an act a week, and draws his thirty shillings from the treasury for it every Saturday night, regular as clock-work; and he says it only takes him a few hours' work. That's brag, very likely, for young Mobbs *is* conceited.

But still, what a splendid thing it would be for little Jemmy, if he should ever be able to do anything as good as that — thirty shillings a week for knowing French! I'm sure you'll be a good boy and stick to your book, and learn as fast as you can, and do all that kind Miss Milne tells you. Won't you, Jemmy? There's a dear child. Kiss his mother, then, precious. And what a sweet singer she is, Mr. Gossett. Ah! you're a judge. I'm sure I never heard such singing. Pure as a bell her voice is. I'm not a musician myself, and I haven't much ear. I never could sing myself, not to speak of. Even in my young days, when down at Bath, I always disliked the part of Ophelia on that account. I felt that I wasn't the thing in it. But I know good singing when I hear it as well as anybody; and I'm sure Miss Milne's voice sounds to me the perfection of music. There; and I don't care who says it doesn't."

"She's got a very jolly soprano," says Mr. Gossett, thus appealed to. He was sitting in his shirt-sleeves before his piccolo piano. He had been thundering Rossini's *Pro Peccatis*, with superb volume of voice, dwelling on the sonorous bass notes of the music with an intense enjoyment

—perhaps dragging the time a little here and there, to exhibit fully the glorious character of his *portamento*. “A very jolly soprano. I heard her give out a little roulade the other day as she came downstairs, accompanying something I was playing on the piano. By George, it was beautiful. Perfectly in tune, and exquisitely sweet in quality. Produced, too, without the slightest effort and with no nonsense at all about it, because she could not have known that I could hear her.”

“Oh, she’s above all that,” said Mrs. Simmons, decisively.

“I should like to hear her sing the “*Quand je quittais*,” from *Robert*. Wouldn’t it be fine? Or the final trio—with Rob in the tenor part—to my Bertram—how glorious!” And Mr. Gossett twirled up his moustaches, thrust his hair behind his ears, rolled his eyes—assumed, in short, his most demoniac expression, and began singing furiously—

O tourment! O supplice!
Mon fils, mon seul bonheur,
A mes vœux sois propice,
J’en appelle à ton cœur.

I rather think that would bring the house down—even a frigid London opera audience; don’t you think so, Mrs. S.?”

“How pretty she’d look in the peasant girl’s dress,” said Mrs. Simmons. “I wear a dress very like that in *The Murder of the Red Barn*, and it’s very becoming. I always get two rounds of applause directly I come on in it. Was that the baby crying?”

“And shouldn’t I look fine as Bertram—all black velvet and flame-coloured lining, and a big cloak to stretch out like bat’s wings? By George! I think as soon as I can get any money I’ll have the dress made; one can’t tell how soon it may come in useful. What o’clock is it? I must be off to lecture. Where did I put that book I was reading—*Madden on Monomania*? Oh, here it is. By the way, Mrs. Simmons, if Miss Milne would like to practise on my piano when I am away, it’s quite at her service; I dare say she would, particularly if she’s as fond of music as I am. I ought to have thought of it before. I shall be home to tea, I dare say, at the usual time. Tell Rob, if he should happen to call when I’m out.” And Mr. Gossett hurried away to his medical duties.

“If I dared, I’d ask her to give Amelia a musical lesson,” said Mrs. Simmons. “People may make money any day by knowing music.

There's a brother-in-law of one of the young ladies at the theatre makes an excellent thing of it, accompanying songs at a music hall. I've never heard him, but they tell me he plays beautifully. Yes ; I dare say Miss Milne would like to practise now and then on Gossett's piano. I'll tell her of it at once. It would be a first-rate thing for Amelia if she knew music."

Miss Milne availed herself of Mr. Gossett's good nature. She would often play on the piccolo; sometimes she would sing, accompanying herself—growing quite abstracted and forgetful as the music drew her from herself and the present into a marvellous world of its own. The melody over—the charm broken—there were tears in her glowing eyes, and her heart was throbbing almost painfully.

"How exquisite!" said a voice close to her, on one of these occasions. She sprang away trembling, amazed, frightened. But she smiled soon at her own alarm. Robin Hooper stood at her side.

"Do you like it?" she asked; "it is a simple air by Palestrina, a little old-fashioned, perhaps, but it always seems to me to be full of beauty and tenderness; and it moves me quite absurdly—

it makes me forget everything. I must really give over singing it."

"Oh, no," said Robin; "pray, don't do that."

"I'm strangely nervous and timid now," she said. "I don't know what's come to me. I used to think I was quite brave at one time, but now"—and she hesitated.

"You've been ill, you know," Robin urged, soothingly; "you've only just recovered; you mustn't expect too much all at once."

"But I'm well now—well enough to leave here; and I must leave, too, very soon."

"When will you go?" he asked, with some anxiety.

She paused for a few moments, as though struggling with herself.

"You have been very kind to me, Mr. Hooper," she said at length, in a low, hurried tone. "Believe me, I shall never forget your kindness, even if I were to go from here now and never see you again."

He was about to interrupt, but a slight movement of her hand stayed him.

"I have met with great kindness here—not from you only—more than I had any right to

expect—more than I can ever hope to repay—great goodness—great forbearance. But there are many reasons why I should now leave this place and my friends here—for they have been true friends. Perhaps one reason is sufficient. What avails to disguise the fact?—I am poor—I have my bread to earn.”

Again he was about to speak—to offer her pecuniary aid, perhaps. She thought so evidently, for the blood crimsoned her cheeks and neck, and she lowered her eyes. Robin felt quite hot, and trembling, and wretched, seeing this. How he had pained her! Would she ever pardon the gross good nature which was thinking of offering her money? How thankful he was that he had not put his thought into words. Forgiveness then had been impossible—quite. But she seemed to be annoyed at her own confusion; perhaps ashamed of the pride from which it sprung.

“I have a deep sense of your kindness,” she went on—she had noticed his embarrassment, understood it, and hurried, even at some self-sacrifice, to relieve it—“and I have a deep faith in your willingness to assist me in any way. I shall not forget that the first kind words I heard in this great city came from your lips; and, indeed,

I should not scruple to beg your aid again, in any shape, should I need it. I am sure I should not have to ask in vain."

"How noble!—how generous!—how good she is!" murmured Robin; "and how she reads my heart! My life is at her service—she may be sure of it—now—at any time."

"It has been unavoidable," she continued, "that some mystery has surrounded my coming here. I would have had it otherwise, if I could. But at present, this must be so—less for my sake, perhaps, than for others. Some day, perhaps, I may be able to disclose everything; it is due to you who have been so kind to me—to all my good friends here—that I should do so. Suffice it that I am poor and friendless. If I have relations in London," she said, with much agitation, "believe that strong reasons exist for my not applying to them for assistance—for my not making myself and my situation here known to them. Call me still Miss—Milne—Janet Milne—a governess—or one trying so to earn a living."

"You have given lessons before?" Robin asked, timidly.

"No," she answered; "but I must do so now. I can teach music, French, singing. I have lived

much abroad. Give me your aid to obtain employment in teaching these things."

"Be sure that I will," cried Robin, fervently, "to the utmost of my power. I will solicit, too, all my friends to assist you. I will ask Arnold Page, he is well connected; and through his sister, Mrs. Lomax, there can be no doubt that we shall be able to find something that may suit you. But do not overtax your strength. Are you sure you are well enough to leave this place yet? Are you sure you can undertake the fatigue of such duties? And pray don't be anxious;—you are safe now, and you have friends who will never cease to labour for your welfare."

Earnestly Robin encouraged and soothed her. There was something very winning about the enthusiastic way in which he entered into her plans. Janet's eyes brightened; a smile gleamed upon her lips. A sense of relief and hope came over her, and her usual rather sad, suffering look faded away for the time.

"You are sure to get what you want; I haven't a doubt of it," said Rob. "People will be very glad of such an opportunity; and I know, Miss Milne, that the children that have you for their preceptress will be very lucky children indeed.

And when you've gone away from here, you won't quite forget us all—say that you won't. This queer house, and all its funny ways—for they are funny, are they not? Mrs. Simmons and the children, and Phil Gossett and his great bass voice, and—and me. I wish you'd seen Arnold. He's such a splendid fellow is Arnold. It always does one good to see him. There! I'm glad to see you smiling at all the nonsense I talk! And would you have the great kindness to sing that song again, which I interrupted when I came in, and half spoiled? Thank you. I'm so fond of music. You see" (a glance at the poor curved foot) "I've been an invalid myself, and music has been so great a consolation to me. But I'm better now—quite strong and well. And we'll look in the newspapers every day. You see, it will be very convenient: we can get them downstairs the first thing in the morning, and search the advertisements for something to suit you. There are often advertisements for governesses who have acquired French abroad. You must keep up a good heart, Miss Milne; there's not a doubt that we shall find something to suit you."

Some such conversation had passed between Robin Hooper and Janet; and we may be sure

that he was as good as his word, and read the advertisement columns of *The Times* with an attention he devoted to no other portions of that wonderful paper, and pestered his friends with recommendations of Miss Milne as a young lady most competent to give instruction in music, French, singing, and the ordinary branches of an English education; and desired that they would be so good as to pester all their friends in the same way, and especially married ladies and the mothers of families. Indeed, Robin's interest in Miss Milne was of so pronounced a character, that it was hardly surprising that his friends should make it the subject of some comment.

"I think Mr. Hooper comes here oftener than he used," Mrs. Simmons remarked, significantly. "It may be because so many of his friends are gone out of town. Still, I don't believe that *I'm* the attraction;" and here the good lady looked very roguish indeed. "Nor you either, Mr. Gossett—no; nor you, my precious baby darling. Oh" (with a change of voice), "no! baby mustn't be naughty; baby mustn't tear up my part, or what will they say at the theatre!"

"Ah, Rob!" quoth Mr. Gossett, "what it is to be susceptible! You're twisting certain golden

tresses round your heart, and you'll be surprised some day to find you can't undo the tangle. You'll burn your wings, my little moth, if you will go so near the candle. You've decided feverish symptoms—quick pulse, eyes over bright, excitable manner. We shall have to make you up a bed in St. Lazarus Hospital. We'll try and do without the knife if we can. As for the lady——”

“I don't like such jests,” said Rob, hotly. “There are some things that should be spoken of lightly. Please don't mention *her* again like that. Of me you may say what you will; only, you know, there are chances against my loving or being loved. I'm but a poor sickly cripple. Remember that when you jest: it will give a pleasant sting to what you say.”

“My dear Rob, you're really angry! You know I wouldn't say a word to grieve you for the world.”

“Forgive me, Phil; I lose my temper sometimes, without a cause: I don't know why. Don't say another word about it.”

“That's right, old boy! And now let's have some music. What shall it be—our crack duet from *Robert*, or would you sooner have the one from *Moïse*, your pet?”

“Wait a few minutes, Phil. I don’t think I can sing just yet. My breath’s a little short.”

But it was true none the less that Mr. Robin Hooper found his way from the Temple to Coppice Row more frequently than formerly.

“Mr. Hooper,” said Miss Milne, one day, with a slightly troubled look, her violet eyes turned from him—“Mr. Hooper, can you tell me if it is far from here to this address?” She handed to him a scrap of paper.

“Kew Green,” he read. There was something written above it which he could not quite decipher. “Oh, no; it is not very far. You can get an omnibus from Piccadilly, or from the Strand. The Brentford omnibus will take you to the foot of the bridge; or the Richmond will take you over the bridge, across the Green itself.”

“I must go there,” she said; “I have wanted to go before. If”—and she stopped.

“Would it not be better that some one should accompany you?” he began, and then he blushed. “Will she think I am urged by curiosity?” he asked himself. “Will she think that I want to force my company upon her?” And he grew quite wretched. “How she will despise me!”

Then he added aloud, "I mean that I think—I have no doubt—that Mrs. Simmons would be happy to go with you. Would it not be better so? It will be a protection to you. You are not very strong yet. You are not used to walking by yourself, perhaps. The crowds in the streets may alarm you; they are rather alarming at first."

"I came here alone," she said. "You had forgotten that. No; I will go alone. It is not a very terrible journey," and she smiled. "It was not *that* I wished to say. But, if anything should happen—if I should not return——"

"Not return!" cried Robin, aghast. "You will not leave us so suddenly, without saying good-by even!"

"I think it not likely. I think it most unlikely. Pray be calm. But," she went on hurriedly, "under a certain train of circumstances which I must not, which I cannot now explain, my return might be prevented" (the thought seemed to make her tremble), "or great difficulties might be placed in the way of it. Should this be so—pray don't let my words disturb you so much—I do not apprehend there will be any cause for this precaution; but, should anything happen to pre-

vent my return here, you will let me write to you; and, should I be placed in a situation of difficulty, you will give me such aid as you can when I shall ask it?"

"Indeed—indeed I will."

"Thank you. Enough! Do not doubt that you will see me in a few hours; but remember this conversation, should I not reappear before dark. But not a word of it to Mrs. Simmons until you hear from me. Good-by." She put out her hand: he pressed it reverently.

"What does this mean?" Robin asked himself, when he was alone again. "Is she in any real danger? Shall I follow her? Shall I try to pierce this cloud of mystery? No: she would never forgive me. Yet if harm should happen to her——," and he paced the room in great anxiety and trouble, dragging his lame foot after him. "Can *she* have enemies? Is it commonly possible? Oh, I wish I had them here, that's all!" And he added, after a pause, "And I wish I was as strong as Phil Gossett." He felt the muscle of his arm curiously, contemplatively.

Janet stood in the awful presence of Miss Bigg.

That lady was discovered, as usual, in her gaunt drawing-room, studying the calf-bound edition of her parent's sublime work. She marked the place at which her reading had been disturbed, after her accustomed manner, with the embroidered card—"Read, mark, digest"—and the green streamers. As usual, she exhibited her teeth, under the delusion that she was smiling cordially upon her visitor. But her manner became a little less winning as she began to appreciate the diffident, frightened manner of Janet.

"You desire to see one of the pupils of this establishment?" she asked, with grim courtesy.

"Yes," was the answer, in a soft, trembling voice. "Miss Gill—a pupil here. Is she well? Tell me that she is well!"

The schoolmistress started, but recovered herself. Her lips closed. Her efforts at cordiality were checked in mid career. She stiffened herself—a process of congelation came over her—her back seemed to be especially frozen—very hard indeed.

"Why do you wish to see the child Gill?" she inquired, in her coldest tones; yet with something of amazement, if not alarm, in her dull black eyes, like burnt-out coals.

"Let me see her," said the visitor, appealingly ;
"I am the only friend she has in the world."

"You are not aware, perhaps, that it is one of the rules of this seminary that the pupils shall be visited only by their relations."

"I am her relation ——"

"Indeed!" and Miss Bigg gazed into the trembling eyes of the other with a cruel incredulity and suspicion. "A relation?"

"Yes, indeed I am — her sister — her only sister."

"Oh!" Miss Bigg jerked out—apparently not crediting the statement, resolved not to discuss the matter further, but rather to avail herself, as best she might, of the admission of relationship—true or false. "Pray, are you aware that there is a large sum—a very large sum—due to me on account of Miss Gill's education and board in this seminary?"

"I feared that such might be the case."

"Are you prepared to pay the money due?" and Miss Bigg pretended to believe that her visitor was about to settle the account then and there, and took out the keys of her desk, and seized a pen, as though at once to fill up and sign a receipt in full.

"No," answered Janet, "I cannot do this. I have not this money. Indeed I have not. Still, let me see her; pray let me see her!"

And the tears clustered on her eyelashes, like diamond fruit on silken branches.

Miss Bigg was not easily moved. She was revolving in her own mind the consequences, so far as she was concerned, of an interview between the pupil and her sister.

"Stop a minute," she said; "there's no hurry, it seems to me. I have a question or two to put. Where's your father? Where's the father of Miss Barbara Gill, who consigned her to my care a long time back, who was in India then? Where is he now?"

"He is in England now," said Janet, with lowered eyes; "at least I think so."

"You think so. Don't you know? Where do you live?"

"I—I may not tell you."

"Not tell. Oh! ho! this is very pretty. How am I to believe your story? Not tell where you live! Perhaps you call that respectable. Well; opinions differ. I don't, so I tell you—there."

And Miss Bigg forgot her dignity entirely, she

was so carried away by her wrath. She grew quite red in the face; her head was shaken violently, as though she were in an express train at its topmost speed; her figure rocked to and from, like a ship in a storm, with an appropriate accompaniment of creaking, as of timbers—arising, perhaps, from the tension of the laces and the convulsion of the buckram of that article of attire which generally points out the waist in female figures—and she snapped her grisly fingers in the face of Miss Janet.

“And who’s to pay me? Tell me that!” she went on. “Who’s to pay me for the board and education of this child? Do you suppose that I’m made of gold, that I should find money for such a purpose—and for all these years? It’s shameful, it is,—shameful. A wicked, cruel robbery, that’s what it is. And now you come here—as bold as brass—as cool as ——” (I’m afraid she was so far forgetting herself and her position as to be very nearly saying—“as a cucumber”—an obviously-vulgar simile; but she stopped herself just in time, fortunately) “as cool as—as anything. You’re her sister, are you? You can’t tell where you live, or where your father lives—or won’t tell; isn’t that it rather? Your father

a Captain? I don't believe he's any more a Captain than I am; a bankrupt scoundrel and thief, that's what I call him. Why doesn't he pay me the money he owes me? tell me that; the impostor, the cheat, the swindler! ——”

And for some time, very angry indeed, Miss Bigg poured forth a well-sustained fire of vituperation into her cowed and trembling opponent. (You see, like love, anger is a great leveller.)

“Let me see her!” appealed Janet.

“And not only must I find money for her education and board, but I must be put to all sorts of trouble besides. I must have all sorts of people coming here at all times of the day—first one and then the other—and my servants kept running up and down stairs for this child; and never to get a halfpenny for her; it's too bad, it is—a great deal too bad!”

And Miss Bigg brought her clenched hand down heavily upon the sublime work upon the table, regardless of the very expensive binding and of all reverence for her father the poet, in her desire to give due emphasis and force to her words.

“Now it's *you* coming here; now it's Miss Carr—a conceited hussy, I should like to whip

her well. Now it's a doctor from London, coming down express in his own carriage, as if the apothecary from Brentford wasn't good enough. Now it's a Frenchman ——"

"A Frenchman!" interrupted the visitor, white with terror, trembling all over.

"Yes, a Frenchman," reiterated Miss Bigg, "bowing, and sniggering, and shrugging his shoulders, and talking his horrid gibberish." (In her anger, Miss Bigg did not perceive how this remark confirmed a current rumour as to her defective acquaintance with the French language.)

"Heaven!" gasped Janet, "has *he* been here, then!"

"But Miss Mullins made short work of him and his broken English. She could give him as good French as he brought; and she ought to, considering the salary I pay her. Nothing but carriages coming in at the gates, and knock, knock at the doors; and everybody worried out of their lives with fright; and all for this puny, sick child."

"Is she ill?" interrupted Janet, starting up. "Let me see her! Don't send me away!—don't, don't, for heaven's sake! Indeed, indeed

it's not my fault that you have been wronged, as you say! Indeed, if I had the money, I would pay you ten times over, if need were, only—only let me see my poor little sister!

“*If*, indeed! No; you’ve found your way here, and you may find your way back, for all the good you’ve done. I’ve had quite enough of your sister, I don’t want you; and if I had your bankrupt father here—well! I’d give him a piece of my mind, that’s all. There; it’s no use your talking.”

“Oh, don’t turn from me!” cried Janet, piteously. “Let me see her, I beg of you—on my knees ——”

“Hush! get up; there’s some one at the door; don’t be foolish.”

Meanwhile, a tall, thin, carelessly-dressed man had entered a room on the upper floor.

“What’s the matter?” he asked, sternly. “Why do you keep that poor child mewed up in this low-roofed place?”

“She’s a bit poorly,” answered an ill-favoured woman, carelessly. It was Booth, and she was regarding the patient—poor Baby Gill—not too affectionately. Perhaps the inquiries concerning

the child had given trouble to the household at Miss Bigg's seminary. "But she ain't so bad as she makes out, it's my belief; there's a good bit of shamming about her illness—there always is about most children. She'd try to make you think that she's ever so weakly, just to shirk her hymns and religious dooties."

"Don't be a fool," said the doctor calmly; "and open that window and let some fresh air in. One can hardly breathe in this place. What is it, my dear?" he went on, turning to the invalid kindly and taking her thin, worn hands into his—large, muscular. "Don't tremble, my dear—don't be frightened. There's no one going to hurt you. It's only the doctor come to take care of you, and make you well again." And he smoothed her silky yellow hair from her burning forehead, and then paused suddenly, looking into her large, feverishly-bright eyes. "Surely I've seen this face before, or one strangely like it. It must be so. But where? In one of the wards of St. Lazarus? I can't think. Bah! what does it matter? Out of the hundred faces I see every day is it wonderful there should be two alike?"

He talked to the child kindly, soothingly.

"There's no shamming here," he went on, with his fingers on her wrist. "Very weak, very feverish. We must put some fat upon these poor cheeks, little one, I think." And he stroked gently her burning face. "You've no appetite, have you, my dear? but you're thirsty. Yes, very thirsty. Don't cry, my dear. We'll soon make you well, if I have to take you away with me in my pocket. That's right—that's a little like a smile, I think." He laid his hand upon her forehead. "We must have no learning hymns or anything of that sort. Here, you woman, I'm speaking to you—no worrying the child about her duty and her collect, or nonsense—do you hear?"

("Awful language!" muttered Booth, to whom these words were addressed. "I wonder a thunderbolt don't fall on him. But these doctors are all alike. They'll suffer for it by and by—that's one comfort; and a joyful thought for the elect it is, too.")

He had placed his stethoscope—it was always ready in his hat, he never went anywhere without it—upon the chest of the child. He put his ear to the end of the tube, listening attentively. His was not a face that betrayed much of what was passing in his mind. He had schooled his muscles to

maintain a rigidity of expression—a calm, a repose, that nothing could disturb. Only a very close observer could have noted some change in the glance of his bright, kindly, grey eyes. There was a look of sadness, of tenderness, not traceable in them before. His examination concluded, there seemed to be a new gentleness in the way he once more smoothed the soft hair of his little patient, and drew the clothes of the bed comfortably round her.

“You must take care and not catch cold, my dear. What’s your name? Barbara Gill, isn’t it? Yes. Well, my little Miss Gill, we must do all we can for you, and try and make you well: and you’ll be a good little girl, won’t you? and do all that I tell you? And we must get some medicine made up for you; and *you*”—(he added, to Booth, in a stern whisper)—“you’d better take care and do all that I tell you, or it will be the worse for you. I’ll speak to the schoolmistress downstairs. You need not come down. I know my way, and I’ll write a prescription in the drawing-room. You be sure and have it made up at once.”

“Bad symptoms,” he said to himself, as he passed rapidly down the stairs.

He arrived at the drawing-room just in time to

hear a voice cry in piteous tones. "Pray, let me see my sister."

He entered as Janet rose from her knees. He advanced to her kindly—"You here, my dear Miss"—he stopped, a probing gaze fixed upon her. She started back, confused.

"Dr. Hawkshaw!" she gasped, the colour rushing into her face.

"The sister of the pupil upstairs," Miss Bigg said, savagely waving her hand—that awkward gesture implying introduction.

"I have the pleasure of knowing Miss—*Gill*," he said, giving the name after a pause, and dwelling upon it significantly. He stretched out his hand and shook hers warmly. "Miss Gill has been a patient of mine. There is a strong likeness between the sisters."

Frightened at first, Janet now drew some courage from the doctor's friendly manner.

"How did he come to know her, I wonder!" muttered Miss Bigg.

"You wish to see your sister? I have just left her. Come upstairs—this way. I need not trouble you, Miss Bigg—I can show the young lady the way."

Outside the drawing-room door, Janet was

about to speak—to express her thanks—her gratitude—to say, indeed, she hardly knew what.

“Never mind, Miss—*Gill*,” he said, smiling. “I think I can keep a secret as well as any one. Doctors don’t tell tales. There is no need of any explanation. Perhaps I know all about it, as it is; and if I don’t, perhaps it doesn’t very much matter. Be sure I will forget—when I leave here—that my late patient in Coppice Row and the young lady I meet here visiting her sick sister are one and the same person, though their names are different. Not a word, my dear. When you have need of a friend, why you know my address.” (He pressed her hand.) “Go in at that door, my dear. Never mind the rude old woman you’ll meet there. You’ll have the help of another pretty little lady, and I’m sure, together, you’ll be more than a match for her.”

Janet, engrossed by the object of her mission, had observed neither the handsome barouche, nor the compact brougham—technically termed a pill-box, I believe—standing at the entrance of Chapone House, and evidencing visitors.

She entered the room on the upper floor. A

young lady, who had retreated during the attendance of the doctor at the bedside of the patient, had resumed her position there. Janet, pale and nervous, approached the bed.

“Oh, heaven! How she is changed!” she said at last, in a choking voice. The tears dimmed her sight. She brushed them away. It seemed to be only with an effort she could recognize the lineaments of her sister in the thin face of the sufferer before her.

“Baby, dearest!” she cried, in a tone of anguish, and she sunk upon her knees at the side of the bed.

“Who is it? Leo, dear, tell me?” said the child, with wide open eyes, twining her arms round her friend, and something scared at the agitation of the new comer.

“Don’t you know me, Baby. I’m your sister—Jenny—surely you remember Jenny!”

“Jenny!” repeated the child, staring half vacantly.

“Yes; your sister Jenny! A long while ago—you remember me now? I see you do.” Some gleam of recognition shone in the child’s large, wondering eyes.

“Kiss me, Jenny,” she said, after a few

moments. "Yes; I remember you; that is, I think I do. But you're so big to what my Jenny used to be. Still, you're like her—yes—Jenny had eyes like that. But you're crying. Jenny never cried—only once—that was when mamma went away to be an angel. Don't cry—and you'll be kind to me, won't you?—as the Jenny of a long time ago used to be—as Leo has been always. Yet, no; you can never be so good and kind to me as Leo has been. Dear Leo," and the wasted arms clung yet more closely to Leo. Janet turned to her with streaming eyes, her golden hair crumpled, her cheeks tear-stained.

"You have been kind to my poor little sister. God bless you for it! And He will—be sure He will. And, indeed, she has had need of friends. Oh, my poor, poor Baby, that I should see you thus!"

"Could I help being kind to her?" said Leo's soft voice; "and it is wrong to praise me so, for I have much to reproach myself with. I have neglected her sadly until now. I am very glad to see you," she went on, simply, pressing Janet's hand. "Baby has always been my friend, and you will be my friend too."

"God bless you!" said Janet, greatly moved.

"I owe you already more than I can ever hope to repay." And she surrendered herself to a passionate burst of weeping. The tears clustered in Leo's eyes: for emotion is very infectious. She rose to withdraw.

"Don't go yet, Leo!" cried the child; "don't leave me yet. I can't bear to be alone, not even with her—with Jenny. Don't cry, Jenny; I am beginning to love you again—I am indeed—and—and I think I shall be well again—indeed I do, now that you are both so kind to me."

"My poor, poor sister!"

"Please tell me, Doctor Hawkshaw," quoth Miss Carr, "is there any danger? When may we move her?"

"There are bad symptoms, my dear young lady," answered the doctor. "I can say little more at present; and I think you mustn't stay too long in the sick room, there may be risk for you. As to removal—it would be the best thing to be done, for she is not well attended to here; but we must leave it for a day or two. I will come down to-morrow, if possible. I have left a prescription, with full instructions. Give my best compliments to your mamma. And *you* are going

to take Miss Gill back to town? Well, well; perhaps that will be better. I was waiting to see if I could be useful in that way. We will do all we can for our little patient, be sure of it."

"Get home as quick as you can, John," said the doctor, as he stepped into his carriage. "Poor child! Organic disease, I'm afraid; but it's as well to get her away from that infernal old woman and her hymn-book."

And the doctor, who was never idle, took up a book he had with him in the carriage, and began making, with his gold pencil-case, marginal observations and corrections. They would be useful when a new edition was called for of his valuable work on the *Physiology of the Stomach*.

There was some excitement in Coppice Row when it was known that Mrs. Simmons's lodger had returned in a superb barouche, and that the charmingly-dressed young lady in it (her bonnet made an immense sensation in the neighbourhood) took a most affectionate farewell of her—even to kissing her—with the words, "I shall see you again very soon. Good-by, dear."

"You don't know what a relief it is to me to

see you back again quite safe and sound," cried Robin to Janet, as she re-entered. "Do you know how I've been amusing myself? I've been reading all the advertisements in *The Times*—not merely those which state that a governess is wanted, but all the others as well. It's interesting; but I did it to kill time until you came back. Look here now, this is a curious advertisement—in the second column;" and he read aloud,—“‘To JANET. — CHER ANGE, RETURN THEN. WHY WILL YOU NOT? WOULD YOU KILL YOUR INCONSOLABLE ANATOLE?’ Hullo! Good heaven! Why, what's the matter? Hi! Quick! Mrs. Simmons! Some water! Could it refer to her? She's fainted dead away!”

CHAPTER X.

AU CAFÉ.

THERE are English *quartiers* in Paris, as we all know. For that matter, throughout France, especially along its coasts,—it being simply in the nature of things that the Briton should feel at home in the presence of the waves,—are there numberless little, true-blue, stanch, Anglican settlements planted here and there—exotics that have taken firm root in a new soil, without the sacrifice in the remotest degree of the characteristics of their derivation—nay, rather as a matter of principle, clinging the more to national prejudices and opinions, and maintaining national habits and customs, from the fact that they are in a foreign and unsympathizing presence, and that it is indispensable, therefore, to demonstrate utterly that Englishmen *will* be Englishmen all the world over under any condition of circumstances. Formally, perhaps, we have surrendered Calais; but we

hold the more Boulogne, and many another French sea-port, while in the capital we possess, of course, among other properties, the superb quadrilateral stronghold, known as the Hôtel Meurice. And there are French colonies in England, confined, for the most part, to the chief city, however; for the Gallic proclivities are not nautical nor provincial, still less pastoral. It is in London then we must look chiefly for the French *quartier*; and we shall find also German settlements, where a large consumption of sour krout occurs, and of beer, and great smoking, and mystic conversation—philosophical, but foggy; and where the melodies of fatherland, part sung, waken the echoes of the walls; and much simple kindness and good will, with some proneness to the muddle-headed, prevail. And there are Italian settlements, especially thriving during operatic and southern revolutionary periods; and Greek colonies, addicted to pastry and card-playing, the games being of a kind unknown to northern regions. (It is said that playing with each other, the Greeks play quite fairly. Perhaps when Greeks meet Greeks there are reasons why a different line of conduct is not possible.) It is not only the Jews, therefore, who wander,

carrying their country with them and the predilections of their people—their undying love for fried fish, the passover cake, the olive, the old clothes, and the best side of a bargain. Methinks other nations do likewise. The Englishman greets a compatriot in a distant clime—greets him cordially—without prejudice, it is possible, to his privilege of cutting him when they encounter subsequently at home in Pall Mall—and for a season they are friends; and they will rally round them other Englishmen, and they will cherish the customs of their country: forming, indeed, the nucleus of a colony. And so with the aliens sojourning here; so we have Leicester Square; and so we have the *café* in the neighbourhood of that square, to which the reader is now to be introduced.—This way, if you please: the *Café de l'Univers*.

The name was inscribed on the door, over the door, upon the door-posts, the gas lamp, and in gilded letters upon the window panes. The *café* was evidently proud of its name, and thrust it before the spectators at every possible opportunity. An alderman, recently knighted, could not have derived more enjoyment from his title. It was not a large establishment; it might even not unfairly

be called a small one. The *Café de l'Univers*, with a little squeezing, might perhaps have accommodated about a score of guests. Plaits of dingy-figured muslin screened the window and the door, admitting light, yet excluding the public gaze. The *café* was eminently French in character. It had not suffered by its change of venue in this respect. It was French from the flower on the ceiling to the pumps of the *garçon*. It might almost have been transplanted direct from Paris. Indeed, there was much of the precarious nature and delicate health of the transplant about it. It was as an *émigré* bereft of his possessions, and considerably pinched by bad fortune, and a comfortless climate. Its state was a little sickly at present—faded, degenerate. What might have looked like splendour in an original state had a certain cheap and tawdry appearance under the change of air and situation. Certainly the decorations were grand—pretentious; but they were cheap. You could note the fact in the thin cotton-velvet, straw-stuffed cushions; in the glaring but inexpensive paper on the wall; in the gorgeous but green-hued looking-glasses, and their thinly-gilt, fly-speckled frames; the chipped crockery; and the marble

tables, coffee-stained, and pencilled with the calculations of the domino-players. But perhaps noting these things, we are inquiring too curiously. What did it matter that the prosperity of the *Café de l'Univers* was not too well assured? Think of the comfort the place was to the French colony in the neighbourhood. Half-closing his eyes, or glancing through glasses rose-tinted by memory and imagination, the exile might here dream that he was back again in his own beautiful country—might be led to forget for a time the brumal horrors of this land of his refuge; his ears were refreshed with the accents of his own language, uttered by his own countrymen, the rattle of the dominoes, the clatter of spoons, the tinkling of glasses, the clash of crockery, and now and then the click of the ivory balls in collision on the French billiard-board in the room adjoining. While, for the regalement of his nose, was there not ever the pungent odour of French cooking redolent throughout the establishment?

There was a *dame de comptoir*, in black silk, amply flounced; a lace head-dress, about the size of a pen-wiper, trimmed with cherry-coloured ribbons; with glossy blue-black hair, tight to her head; and large, hard, bright eyes. She wore massive

earrings, a coral necklace, a substantial brooch, bracelets—flexible serpents, with green enamel heads, and brilliant sham rubies for eyes—and paste rings upon her large fingers, rather less white than her worked cuffs, probably from having been washed less carefully. Her features were large; but she was handsome. It was even said that there had been no less than three duels among visitors at the *café* on her account. She was so greatly admired—so loved even—though she steadily refrained from exhibiting any preference for one of her idolators over the others. Her age was doubtful. She spoke of her *jeunesse* in melancholy tones, as of a thing of the past; but it was by no means certain that she would permit any one else to adopt like language. She had experienced sorrows, she admitted, dabbing tearless eyes with her handkerchief; but, then, most Frenchwomen, according to their own showing, have suffered similarly, without being apparently much the worse; and one is inclined, in such cases, to pay respect to an established form rather than to expend sympathy upon an individual grief which may be purely supposititious. Her complexion was a mystery: Nature had been greatly assisted—indeed, as has often happened,

had called in so powerful an ally as to be overcome, instead of aided. The native hue of the *dame de comptoir* was very nearly lost under the warm coating derived from the rouge-pot, under the plentiful use of the powder-puff; while yet evidences remained prompting unfavourable ideas; here and there, under the white dust, certain unpleasing rednesses were traceable—just as you may discern the stars for all the white scud veiling them. Still—and, notwithstanding, too, her strong, square animal jaw, gross mouth, and double chin—the lady was an object of great admiration at the *Café de l'Univers*. Was she married or single? No one knew, though some had theories of their own on the subject. But the question is more English than French: and we have said that the café was eminently French. She was called Madame always: Madame Desprès. The *habitués* of the café did not trouble themselves with inquiries touching any Monsieur of that name.

Madame sat at her counter, doing nothing industriously, save when an account was to be received or an order given. A glass-case before her contained brandied cherries; behind her, ranged upon a shelf, were various liqueur bottles;

at her side, a collection of cigars. She had a grand, calm manner, full of self-possession, and what may be called a laborious smile, too studied to be cordial, and maintaining its set creases upon her fleshy face long after the cause producing it had ceased. She bowed her head to her friends entering or departing, and to the frequenters of the café, with a courtesy which had yet something in it of condescension.

The frequenters of the *Café de l'Univers* were, for the most part, Frenchmen. And the little Gallic colony thrived on cheap, but comfortable terms, for it was one of the advantages of the place, that you really couldn't spend much money in it, however profusely you might be inclined. Yet there were a few English visitors now and then—we shall refer to them more particularly by-and-by—just as there might be in a French settlement of greater extent, in any part of the globe.

The *café* is busy this evening. Louis, the waiter—the *garçon*, of course, I should say—with the close-shaven blue chin and cheeks, and the white apron—has enough to do. Louis, the waiter, who, being a Swiss, seems on that account to cultivate the outward seeming of a

mulatto; who talks fluently any language under the sun, just as the conjuror's bottle is able, on the shortest notice, to produce any liquor you please to call for,—I feel that Louis would be quite equal to replying to me in Chinese, if I could manage to address to him a query in that language; but there, you see, is my difficulty,—I have really forgotten all my Chinese—(I believe that is the correct mode of confessing ignorance now-a-days),—Louis, the waiter, flits from table to table, with his colossal pots of hot coffee (with chicory) and hot milk, and is very busy indeed. There is the clatter of spoons, the rattle of dominoes, the clash of crockery, and the click of the billiard-balls in constant cannonading in the next room. The *Café de l'Univers* is in full swing this evening—is, indeed, quite noisy, while ever and anon a musical clock strikes up a merry waltz tune, not because the hour or the half-hour has come round, but for independent reasons, and at uncertain periods, the music well executed, with an allowance for an occasional wheeziness and uncertainty, and a shirking of particular notes, as in the case of a veteran performer. The little marble tables are nearly all surrounded with guests.

The doors open and close noisily after their manner. Another visitor has entered; you might know the fact from the gust of fresh air that has rushed into the apartment, rather to the improvement of the general atmosphere of the place. The new comer is an *habitué*. He has removed his hat in compliment to Madame Desprès. She has smiled upon him more radiantly than upon any one else—so a savage-looking man in a velvet cap has whispered to his neighbour, bald, with a superb beard; at least, *we* may note that the smile has brought deeper creases into her face. The new comer has even interchanged words with her, has gone so far as to kiss his hand to her. Madame's deprecating gesture seemed to be not so much intended to stay him as to invite him to proceed, and her smile has become even more forcible. She has placed her ringed—not white—hand before her face, not touching it, for fear of disturbance to its surface, and she has ejaculated, "*Fi donc!*" A little further interchange of pleasantries, and the new comer quits the counter, to saunter down the room in quest of a seat. We may note his appearance as he passes.

A very little, very wizened, very old man—

yes, old in spite of the profuse clusters of curls which give an unnatural size to his head and fall over his high velvet collar, and hide his ears, and decorate his temples ; a head of hair that is indeed a good deal more than natural—opaque, lustreless, coarse black, like the mane of a horse, without a hint of parting anywhere—without a trace of epidermis ; and (you can see now that he has removed his small grease-polished French hat, so curiously curved as to its rims) towering above his forehead in a dense and lofty toupet. What a strange face!—a tanned yellow in hue, full of deep hollows, covered with a network of wrinkles—a criss-cross of ruts rather, they are so indented, as with a broad-graver—quite an arabesque of age. There is something skull-like about the face, with its large, protruding forehead, its boneless, gristly, fragment-like nose, and the grinning teeth—very uneven these, many missing as in a regiment coming from under fire—the row machicolated, like the battlements of a fortress ; and the eyes, small black specks on a blood-shot ground, restless ever, glittering in their hollows like snakes in caverns. There is something terrible-looking about this *habitué* of the *Café de l'Univers*—this vivified mummy, with

his skeleton's head crowned by his exuberant wig, with his manners of gallantry, his young-man airs, with his leer and his smile—he has been known to press his trembling claw hand upon his left breast and vow adoration for Madame Desprès. It is reputed that he is constantly producing love verses in French and English. There is a doubt whether he was or not one of the gentlemen who “went out” because of Madame. Be sure he has given his “proofs,” that he is prepared to go on the ground again with any one at any time. Why, there was a tremendous scene at the *café* one evening: ask any of the *habitués*, and you will obtain a recital—but in a low voice, for fear the new comer should overhear. A young man—Auguste—merry, frank, light-hearted, a clock-maker, it was thought, a frequenter of the *café*, had amused himself with ridiculing the old gentleman—*Le Marquis* he was called there amongst themselves; it was a *plaisanterie*, that was all—he was not a marquis. Auguste had puffed in his face tobacco-smoke; had retained from him his favourite journal; had trod upon his foot—not accidentally; had laughed in his face when requested to apologize; had called him *vieux papa*!—you see? terms of abuse—*pauvre nigaud*, im-

bécile, &c. Oh! the rage of the marquis! He had spat on the floor, ground his teeth, smashed his wine-glass, trembled with passion, and then he had lanced himself at the throat of the poor Auguste. They were separated, but with difficulty. Madame herself had interfered: she had forbidden Auguste to return. More; it was very extraordinary; it was believed that they had met; and Auguste had not since been seen by his friends. It was not known what had become of him. Truly it was marvellous. Did Monsieur desire to see the *Débats*?

Yet he did not give promise of being a very formidable antagonist, this little old gentleman. He tottered as he walked; his back was bowed; his knees were bent; he was scrupulously polite; he removed his hat in recognition of his acquaintances as he passed down the room—for his more intimate associates he had airy gestures and wavings of his hands. He had a favourite seat towards the end of the room, near the stove, and for this he generally made. Since the Auguste episode few were inclined to dispute with him the possession of this seat; indeed, he was regarded as a privileged guest, although his connection with the *café* had not been of very long standing,

or had at least been intermittent. Louis, the *garçon*, seemed to reserve special newspapers for his perusal. Louis was acquainted with the requirements of the visitors; he brought, without instruction, the daily dose of absinthe or vermouth. Reading his paper, the visitor regaled himself with those peculiar refreshments, taking snuff now and then from a grand enamel and silver-gilt box with a painted porcelain design on the lid, rather more artistic, perhaps, than decorous, and stroking a thin tuft he had produced on his sharp chin—a dyed tuft, you could see that; the hairs were quite white at their starting points, though blue-black farther on;—running his dusky fingers through his jet locks in the most natural way in the world. He read through tortoiseshell-rimmed glasses—it was wonderful how they could retain their perch upon his shrivelled nose. He enjoyed intensely the caricatures, rather free in character, in a Parisian humorous broad-sheet fastened on to a staff as though it were a flag. He shook with laughter at some of the jokes not too obvious to English intelligence; you could see his head swaying about in his high black satin stock. In the cold weather he wore a cloak of blue cloth, lined with red camlet, gathered closely round the

neck, so that it gave rather a hunchback appearance to the wearer, and culminating in a collar of ragged rabbit fur. Beneath this a bottle-green dress-coat of an old fashion, high at the back, short in the waist, with puckers on the shoulders, and long sleeves, the cuffs covering his knuckles ; it was plentifully speckled with bright buttons, and was probably quite the mode about the period of peace of Amiens. His close-fitting black trousers were tightly strapped under his highly-polished boots. He was proud of his feet ; in leisure moments he might often be seen engaged in contemplating them. Certainly they were neat-looking and well-shaped ; albeit there was a suspicion that his boots pinched him. It was thought that his rage against Auguste arose in a great measure from the insult offered to his feet.

There were, as we have said, Englishmen visiting the *Café de l'Univers* ; amongst others we may name that promising artist Tom Norris, pupil of the great French artist St. Roche, who had acquired, during a two years' residence in the French capital, and much lounging in the atelier of that eminent painter, a decided French aspect and accent, a contempt for British art—some-

thing to the indignation of Mr. Robin Hooper, who knew the gentleman, and had respect for native talent,—a taste for Bohemian life from a French point of view—not the most desirable—and little else. Tom Norris, returning to his native England with denationalized opinions and predilections, to his intense joy, discovered the tiny French settlement at the *Café de l'Univers*. He was speedily enrolled as an *habitué*. He beat up his friends and acquaintances of the days prior to his labours in the atelier of St. Roche. Artists are the most gregarious of people. Wherever you meet one, you may be sure that there are others not far off—just as lighting upon a grain or two of gold or silver betokens that a mine of the precious metal must be in the neighbourhood. Of course, Tom Norris soon carried off his old comrade Timson,—a student of the Academy, who received the gold medal for the best drawing from the life, and never since did much else. He came to the surface like a fish for that fly, and then went down again into the depths. Timson—the most good-natured, simple, and amiable of men, who would go anywhere or do anything for anybody; who had no thought of to-day, not to mention to-morrow, content to live in the past

with his medal and best drawing from the life, Timson,—who came to the *Café de l'Univers*, and sat down and made himself at home in it, quite as a matter of course, and as though he so achieved the sole mission of his life. And Timson inducted a certain artist-friend, initiating him in the pleasures of Tom Norris's *café*—a certain Mr. Lackington—who somehow brought occasionally in his train a student of medicine and music, by name Mr. Phelps Gossett, and now and then, but less frequently, a poor crippled fellow, whom no one could help liking, called Robin Hooper. Even the handsome presence of Arnold Page had sometime adorned the place.

It was not often that the whole of this party was gathered round one of the little marble tables of the *Café de l'Univers*; but occasionally such an event happened, when there was the noise of very pleasant Britannie conversation wakening the echoes of the place—rousing, but not offending the refugees—giving work to the *dame de comptoir*—and employing, but not in the least destroying the equanimity of Louis, the *garçon*. Nothing, I think, ever would have disturbed the equanimity of Louis, the *garçon*. Waiters are generally tranquil and self-possessed, or they would be

probably unfitted for their profession. But the calmness of Louis approached the sublime. He had been engaged at Vienna during the '48 business. But not even a revolution could dethrone Louis from his serenity. He was employed at a *café*, of course. He was communicative on the subject sometimes, when business was a little dull. The cannonading made a great noise, certainly, monsieur. On one occasion a ball entered the *café* and struck a *demi-tasse* from his hand. He was bearing it to *un Anglais*—a gentleman prisoned in the town by the events of the day. What did you do, Louis, when the *demi-tasse* was knocked from your hands? “M’sieu!” says Louis, surprised (but with calmness) that such a question should be asked, “I brought another to the *Anglais*!”

Pleasant those talks round the marble table, with the cigarettes, the coffee, the chocolate, the incidental *petit verre*, and other cheap delights. The talk of young men, effortless, gay, careless, hopeful, light-hearted—it seems to me is the very best of conversation. The communion of the sages may be more redolent of wisdom; but the soundness of age even cannot compensate for the gossamer grace of youth. There is *heart* in

the talk of young men. Listen to the fogies in the club smoking-room—can you catch even an echo of *that*!

“There are comforts about this place,” says Robin Hooper, “and yet there are some things I don’t like in it. That woman at the door, for instance.”

“You don’t admire her?” cries Tom Norris. “*Mon ami!* What injustice! She is superb! Regard, then, her bust: it is like the antique.” (Having lived two years abroad, he spoke his native tongue with some difficulty and foreign accent, and idiomatically. He was rallied about this manner of his a good deal. But that did not affect him much: he was rather dull at a joke. Jests fall harmless on a man armed with dulness, as cannon balls from the sides of an iron-clad ship.) “St. Roche painted a figure like to her. It represented Revolution—or was it the genius of *Liberté*? I forget. It is no matter. A grand figure, half-nude, leaning upon a guillotine: in one hand a flaming torch, in the other a blood-stained—what you call it?—a chopper? no; it is not that—axe—*merci!* Her foot upon a crown; upon her head a Phrygian cap. It was *magnifique* truly, and it was as Madame

Desprès. Therefore, I adore her. Do you see ?”

“She is like a tigress, I think,” continues Robin, “with her broad jaw, her strong mouth, her glittering eyes. And there is something stealthy and cat-like about her action. When she smiles, I feel my heart turn quite cold.”

“She is grand,” says the pupil of St. Roche. “I should like to paint her life-size.” (He pronounced the words—of course, because he could not help it—*loife-soize*.) “But in this dog of a country—pardon me, my friend; it is not to abuse your land—which, alas! is also mine—but to express what I think—in this dog of a country, what avails to paint life-size. Bah! it’s useless.”

“And then,” and Robin glances round the room, “all these strange-looking men quarrelling, as it seems, over dominoes and such trifles. How fierce they look! What angry mustachios! What yellow complexions!”

“Well, there is a good deal of bile about, I’m thinking,” remarks Mr. Gossett. “The foreigner always strikes me as a fine subject for blue-pill. What’s that tune the clock has struck up, Rob? La! la! la!—la! la! la! Isn’t it an early waltz of Strauss’s? I think it is. That

fellow playing at billiards in the back-room seems to have a decent tenor voice. He began humming just now that beautiful air from *Guido e Ginevra*. It would suit you, Rob ; it's a little high, but you could manage it with practice."

"I've been trying all day to make out what my income is derived from my profession," says Timson, meditatively. "The fact is, I've had a paper served upon me by the tax-gatherer."

"What a burning shame !" they all agree.

"Well, you know, I think it *is* hard upon a fellow," Timson goes on. "He never did it before. Why should he begin now ?"

"Come to Paris, Timson. There's no income-tax there. France is the real land of freedom !"

"Don't interrupt him, Norris ; he's telling a story."

"I dare say you're right, Tom ; and most likely I'll go there. I was only about to say, that on looking through my accounts, the conclusion I arrived at was that my profession was a yearly loss to me. I sell nothing, and I have to buy heaps of canvases and paints, brushes and things. I don't know how I do it, I'm sure ; because, you know, I've no other money. It's quite a

mystery to me how I get on—how I manage to live at all. Here, Louis, another cup of coffee and a cigar.”

“Return, then, with me to Paris. They have love there—in that city, for arts—for artists. You will prosper there, my Timson,” says Norris.

Mr. Gossett breaks in suddenly—

“I’ve discovered such an excellent plan of study. I’m getting up my medical learning at a tremendous pace. It’s on a sort of *memoria technica* principle. You can’t remember one thing separately, but you remember it in conjunction with something else. Well, I study music and medicine together, just as at school we used to learn Greek through Latin. For instance, there are twelve ribs—an octave and a half; five false ribs—answering to the lines in music; twenty-four vertebræ—or three octaves; four bones in the metacarpus—like the spaces in music; and so on through the whole business. The skeleton’s nothing more than an upright grand piano, and I can play what tunes I like upon him. Isn’t it a superb idea? I look at his ribs, and I see the whole scale marked out—whole operas composed. I’ve written out the full description, and I sing it to a Gregorian chant. It’s

very impressive; something like this" (sings in a deep bass voice):—"The *Tarsus* is composed of seven large bones: a firm and elastic arch—for supporting the body,' and so on. Splendid, isn't it? I shall get on capitally like that. And then, you know, there's descriptive music. Fancy the Pericarditis Polka, with exact imitations of the pulsation of the heart under various forms of disease. The Kidney Quadrilles! The Varicose Valse; or—what a sublime opportunity for a composer!—The Stomach Symphony. I defy anybody not to learn upon such a superior system. I shall get through the college as easily as a circus clown through a paper balloon. It's a new discovery. I've a great mind to patent it. My fortune's made. A medical man must succeed who can soothe his patients with song while he cures them with medicine. Many a sick man would jump up and begin to dance if he found me at his bedside singing the drinking-song out of *Der Freischütz*."

These remarks, noisily delivered,—Mr. Gossett was not fond of *sotto voce* singing or speaking,—roused many of the exiles, who glanced curiously at the gathering of men round the little marble table, and were confirmed in the notion they had

for some time entertained, to the effect that the English were a droll people.

“Who’s this coming in?”

“Why, it’s Jack Lackington! How are you, Jack?”

“I’ve had such a dance after you, Rob. I called in the Temple, but I found the oak sported; then I went on to Gossett’s, but I missed you again. I thought it just possible you might be here, and I knew I should find somebody I know. How are you, Norris? How’s French art getting on? By George! look at that Frenchman over there, how the light falls on his bald head and the rough rim of his beard. I’ll make a little study of him, if I can;” and he drew a sketch-book from his pocket. “I might paint him as St. Jerome.”

“Yes; and Madame Desprès as the angel,” added Norris.

It was noteworthy that while Mr. Lackington was accustomed to idle a good deal in his studio, he was sometimes, out of it, moved by extraordinary inclinations to be industrious, and to be seen busily engaged in most inconvenient places—in crowds, at the theatre, in the streets, at dining-rooms, and, as in

the present instance, at the *café*—filling his sketch-books. But perhaps, after all, desultory employment like that is hardly to be regarded as serious work—it is only a preparation for it—not nearer the real thing than mending a pen is to writing. His sketches of this kind were as numerous as they were clever; his finished works were very much more rare. There was about the man some inability to concentrate himself, or he was without any real sense of the value of completion.

“There’s that old French poodle here again,” he said, looking at the elderly gentleman whose appearance we have described; “he must be an awful age, that old man. If he doesn’t take care, I’ll make another sketch of him. Timson, I never see you at work of this kind. If you don’t stick to your profession, and carry it always about with you, as I do, you’ll never get on. There’s nothing like application. Do you think, Norris, that fellow’s at all likely to be the Wandering Jew? or, what do *you* say, Rob—Tithonus, perhaps? But, Lord! it must be a long time since Aurora cared much about him. She’s quite got over her little weakness by this time, I should think.”

The object of these remarks sipped his absinthe, apparently quite unconscious that attention had been drawn to him. The sketch of the bald foreigner had been stopped. The model had felt a draught and put on his hat—a rusty, slouched felt hat. Mr. Lackington's plan was interfered with.

“By the way, Rob,” he said, turning over the leaves of the book, “I’ve stolen a march upon you. I went up into Gossett’s room; I looked through the crack of the door. What do you think I saw?—what do you think I heard? Ha! ha! Fair Rosamond is discovered. I made this sketch. I could only get a profile view of her. Do you think it like?”

Robin took the book eagerly. Phil Gossett looked over his shoulder.

“JANET!” he cried, lustily; “and, by Jove! a capital likeness!”

Tithonus threw down his newspaper, surely with needless impetuosity. He nearly pushed his absinthe off the table. He rose: there was a strange look in his eyes—a combination of cunning and excitement. He moved towards the table at which the friends were seated.

“Pardon me, Messieurs,” he said, with almost

exaggerated politeness, bowing low, pressing his claw hands upon his breast; "the *Charivari*, is it on your table? No; it is my mistake; it is the *Moniteur* of last week." He stood just behind Mr. Gossett as he spoke; he could not help seeing, between the heads of that gentleman and Robin Hooper, the sketch they were intent on. "Ah!" in a voice of rapture, "what a charming head; it is superb—angelic. Monsieur is an artist, then! Ah! it is exquisite. I am no artist, but I can appreciate. Pardon me my rudeness, but I could not help seeing. I adore art. I could not restrain the expression of my admiration."

He spoke fluently in English, though with a foreign accent. Robin closed the book, with angry abruptness. His eye met the Frenchman's, and a feeling of alarm, he knew not why, came over him. The Frenchman, smiling and bowing redundantly, returned to his seat. He had seen the sketch. He sat now with his back to the group, absorbed, as it seemed, in the *Charivari*, with which Louis the imperturbable had furnished him. Perhaps the friends were not aware that in this way he could watch very closely their reflections in a green-hued glass opposite. By-and-by, however, he turned round again; he put down his

paper; he rubbed his eyes, as though fatigued with reading; he leant upon his elbows, covering his face with his hands. Only by very close observation of him could you discover that he was still watching his neighbours stealthily through his fingers.

Robin shivered. He seemed to have conceived an indescribable, unreasoning repugnance to the man.

“Did you notice him, how he glared at the sketch?” he whispered to Phil. “Why was it produced here? It was shameful—it was cruel! Lackington should be more prudent, more careful. What has she done that her name should be made a by-word in such a place as this? I hate that man!”

“Tithonus?”

“He has got eyes like a reptile. Did you notice them?”

“‘Eye of newt and toe of frog,’” muttered Phil Gossett, and he began to hum some of Locke’s *Macbeth* music; and then added, “No, by the way; his feet are very neat.”

“It seems to me that he is capable of anything, that man. There is something absolutely diabolical about his expression.”

“Do you think so?” Mr. Gossett asked, his

calmness in strong contrast with his friend's excitement. "No. He does not come up to my notion of the diabolical. In the first place, he has not got a bass voice, nor a moustache;" and he proceeded to draw a fancy portrait of the Prince of Darkness, for which he might himself have been the sitter.

Lackington's sketch was not again referred to. If Tithonus was listening to hear more of that subject, he must have been disappointed. The conversation had taken a new turn. Tom Norris was relating a wonderful story, which had recently been startling Parisian ateliers; a young artist, a Belgian, a pupil of St. Roche, had been murdered by a Quadroon girl, a *modèle*, in a fit of jealousy it was supposed. She had sharpened a palette-knife, and stabbed him in the back, as, after posing her, he had turned away to his easel. He had fallen dead at once. (Mr. Gossett suggested that the vertebræ had been severed.) He was a young man of much promise, and greatly regretted. The murderess, it was supposed, had escaped in a suit of his clothes, and had reached Algiers; but still there were hopes that she would be captured. It was a wonderful story, full of interesting detail; and Tom Norris was loud in

praise of the Parisian police, rather at the expense of the London constabulary, and in favour of the French administration of justice as compared with the English. Indeed, he preferred everything French—even to the accent in speaking English, as we have shown. Is there not, now-a-days, rather a denationalizing tendency prevalent? Of old, the travelling Briton returned to his native shores, denouncing in round terms, as abominations and absurdities, the manners and customs of foreign nations. But to-day it is rather the fashion for a man to learn so much abroad that he comes back with no inconsiderable contempt for the usages of his friends at home. Perhaps, this is because a different class is travelling now. Both modes of conduct may be open to objection; but of the two I think I prefer the first: there's a sturdy, stanch, thorough-going flavour about it. I always feel inclined to shake hands with an Englishman who, having seen some others, pronounces solemnly his opinion that his own is the greatest and most glorious country in the world; and I have besides what amounts almost to a passion for roast beef.

It grew late. The friends broke up their conclave and departed.

The old Frenchman coughed, three times, a peculiar, artificial cough. A man came out of the billiard-room; it was the man Lackington had begun to sketch, with the bald head and ragged beard. He wore a greasy velveteen coat; his clothes altogether were worn and rusty; he had a dirty red scarf twisted round his throat, with no trace of shirt or shirt collar to be seen. He was very thin, with sunken cheeks and prominent, starting-out eyes. He had a half-fed look. He was always in a perspiration, and polishing his head with a torn handkerchief. He approached Tithonus; he stooped down. Tithonus whispered into his ear.

“*Le boiteux ?*” he asked. Tithonus nodded.

“*Le petit diable boiteux !*” he said, with a smile. It was not an attractive smile. The man put on his hat and sauntered out. Certain of our friends were leave-taking outside. Probably their homes were in different directions. The man looked up at the sky as though anxious about the weather. He held out his hand to feel if it were raining. He busied himself with the manufacture of a cigarette. Presently the group broke up. He followed slowly a detachment of it.

“It was she,” mumbled Tithonus; and he took

from his pocket a ragged book, and made a note in it with a blunt pencil, which he moistened with his tongue to make it mark the more freely. He then leant back in his chair, lost in contemplation. For a long time he remained so without change of position. Then he smiled strangely, and took from his silver-gilt box a copious pinch of snuff.

The hours went by. All the other guests had departed. The gas in the billiard-room was turned off. The lights in the outer room had been lowered. Still, Tithonus stirred not.

There seemed to be no desire to hurry him. Louis took no notice of him. He was busy piling up the chairs upon the table, preparatory to the room being swept in the morning. Madame Desprès had quitted her raised seat; had made for herself a rich cup of chocolate; had enjoyed two small glasses of *parfait amour*. She was now engaged with the pictures of the *Charivari*, the meaning of which it did not appear that she comprehended clearly. Tithonus, motionless, silent, retained his seat. He was evidently a favoured guest. If he had chosen to remain all night, it was probable that he might have had his way. The shutters were up, the

outer door of the *café* was closed; Louis had now even removed his apron. He was reading French, English, and German newspapers indifferently.

There was a tap upon the shutters. It was twice repeated. Tithonus rose and moved to the door. Passing Madame, he bowed, removing his hat; then paused to mumble certain words of compliment. Madame smiled radiantly. He jested. She patted him gaily on the shoulder. He took her large hand, caressed it between his two shrivelled claws, then pressed it reverently to his lips, and so went out. Louis murmured and shrugged his shoulders. Madame sailed towards him.

“*Enfant*,” she said, “you forget: Monsieur Anatole is rich: Monsieur Anatole is *millionnaire*.”

M. Anatole stood under a lamp-post. The man with the bald head handed him a scrap of paper. M. Anatole read in a low voice:—“‘Mr. R. Hooper, Mr. A. Page (probably the former), Sun-Dial Buildings, Temple.’ Hem! There is a mistake, I think,” he said. “But we must see. We must not lose the scent now.” Again he whispered in the ear of his companion. The man nodded. Soon after they parted.

M. Anatole paused to take a pinch of snuff.

“Never mind,” he mumbled. “I shall find her. I put out my hand—so.” He extended his arm. “I draw it in—so, and in my clutch—*la chère petite*! Never fear. Who will prevent me?”

And he walked on leisurely.

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SMITH, ELDER AND CO.,
LITTLE GREEN ARBOUR COURT, OLD BAILEY, E.C.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



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